

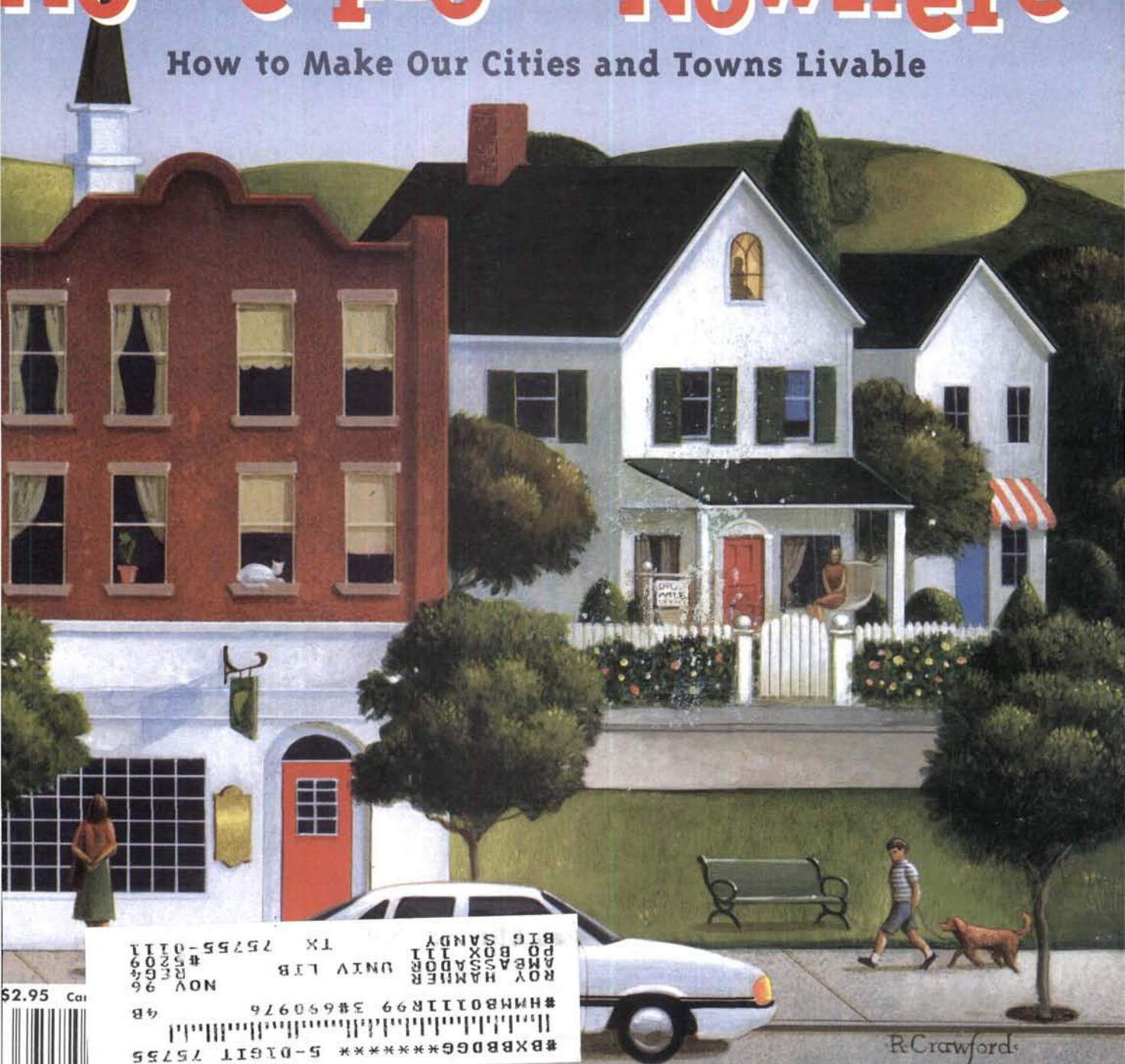
ROBERT D. KAPLAN ON THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF U.S. NATIONHOOD

The Atlantic Monthly

SEPTEMBER 1996

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by James Howard Kunstler

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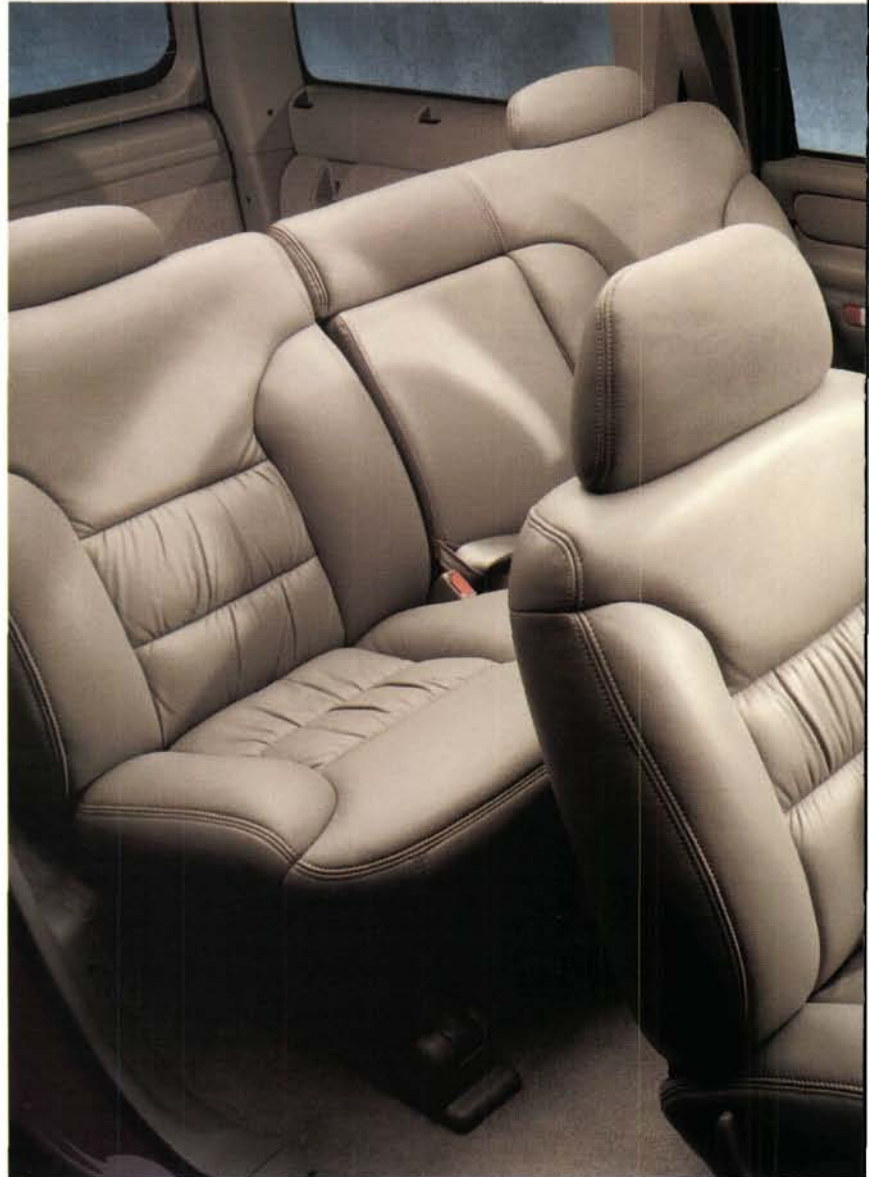
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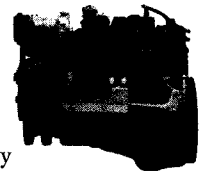


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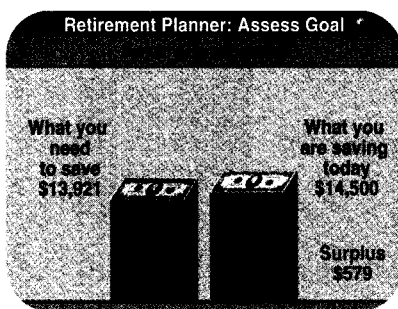
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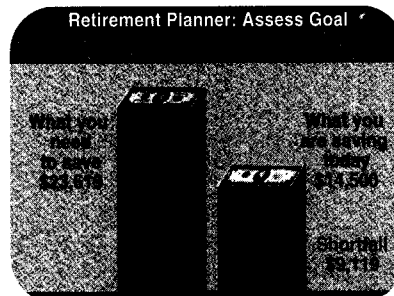
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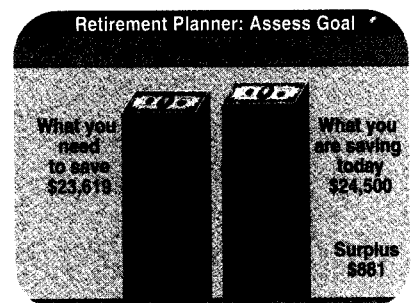
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a bed & breakfast
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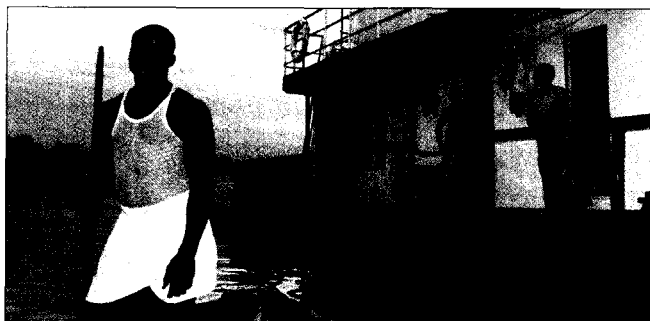
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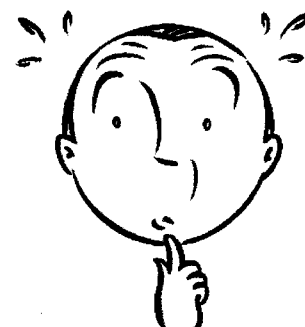
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Why euphemisms warrant a statistical index all their own.

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They are skeptical of government and yet active in politics. They defy easy stereotyping. However the Republicans fare nationally come November, the influx of women into the Republican leadership at all levels will increasingly shape the party's dynamics.

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Postwar urban and suburban development in the United States can be summed up as follows: Almost everywhere laws have prohibited the building of the kinds of places in which human beings have traditionally felt good and can afford to live. We know enough now, the author writes, to begin designing our way out of this situation—and some architects and planners are trying to do so.

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Fort Leavenworth, in Kansas, has for more than a century been the place where the Army has prepared its most promising commanders to "fight the next war." Today, when military intellectuals at Fort Leavenworth ponder America's future—as much through the reading of ancient history as through the analysis of computerized scenarios—they are profoundly unsettled by what they see.

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The rock opera *Rent* has won a Pulitzer Prize, the Tony Award for best musical, and nearly unanimous critical acclaim. Its success, the author believes, represents the most pervasive case of wishful thinking in years.

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Cover art by Robert Crawford

ARTIST: LEONID GORE, RUSSIAN, BORN 1960 (MINSK)





77 NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

THE *Atlantic Monthly* has had an online presence since November of 1993, when it launched an interactive edition on the America Online network (keyword: Atlantic). Last fall the magazine launched a more advanced digital edition on the World Wide Web (located at <http://www.TheAtlantic.com>). And in March of this year the magazine unveiled Election Connection '96 (located at <http://www.TheAtlantic.com/Atlantic/election/connection/>) within the *Atlantic* Web site.

The centerpiece of Election Connection is an archive of more than 170 articles that have been published in *The Atlantic Monthly* since 1860, when the first editor, James Russell Lowell, wrote a piece titled "The Election in November" and gave the magazine's endorsement to Abraham Lincoln. The articles have been selected for the insight they provide into subjects relevant to the present election campaign.

Visitors to Election Connection are greeted by quotations and facts drawn from the day's news and from current political commentary. Hypertext links often lead from these to articles within the archive. Readers may also choose to browse the entire archive, where they will encounter analyses by prominent journalists, historians, economists, and policy experts of the

past century: George F. Kennan on foreign policy. Barbara Dafoe Whitehead on family values. Nicholas Lemann on race and poverty. Peter G. Peterson on the federal budget. Elizabeth Drew on Congress. James Q. Wilson and Wendy Kaminer on crime. Peter Drucker on the knowledge society. Bill McKibben on the environment. This collection of *Atlantic* articles is amplified by further hypertext links to the best, most informative resources we could find on the Web.

Another part of Election Connection is an online poll called

Executive Decision. This poll doesn't ask people to voice an opinion on a subject about which they may know little; it challenges them to suppose that they are in a position of leadership, to read competing arguments from different sides of an issue—in the form of memos to a hypothetical President, written by a team that has included James Fallows, Jack Beatty, and Katie Bacon—and then to make a policy decision. If a poll participant chooses to write an explanation of his or her decision, it is posted publicly. —THE EDITORS

NOTE: As reflected in the changed heading of this column, we have moved our editorial, production, new-media, and business offices to new quarters, in Boston's historic North End.



CONTRIBUTORS

Jack Beatty ("A Magisterial History") is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*. He is the author of *The Rascal King: The Life and Times of James Michael Curley* (1992).

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Christopher Jane Corkery ("Central and Main") is the author of *Blessing* (1985). Her work has appeared in *Partisan Review*.

Robert Crawford (cover art) is an artist whose work has appeared on hundreds of book and magazine covers. His work was chosen for the cover of the premier calendar edition of *The Old Farmer's Almanac*, and a limited edition of his print *Litchfield Evening* was recently issued.

Francis Davis ("Victim Kitsch"), a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*, is the author of *The History of the Blues* (1995). A collection of his essays, *Bebop and Nothingness*, was published this spring.

Robert D. Kaplan ("Fort Leavenworth and the Eclipse of Nationhood") is a contributing editor of *The Atlantic*. His most recent book, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, was published this spring by Random House. Several portions of the book first appeared in these pages.

Corby Kummer ("Molten Gold") is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*. He is the author of *The Joy of Coffee* (1995).

James Howard Kunstler ("Home From Nowhere") is the author of eight novels, including *An Embarrassment of Riches* (1985) and *The Halloween Ball* (1987), and of *The Geography of Nowhere: The Rise and Decline of America's Man-Made Landscapes* (1994). His article in this issue is drawn from his book by the same title, to be published next month by Simon & Schuster.

Hanif Kureishi ("D'Accord, Baby") received an Academy Award nomination in 1986 for his screenplay for *My Beautiful Laundrette*. He is the author of *The Black Album* (1995), a novel. Kureishi's story in this issue will appear in his collection *Love in a Blue Time*, to be published by Scribner next year.

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Barbara Wallraff (Word Court) is a senior editor of *The Atlantic*.



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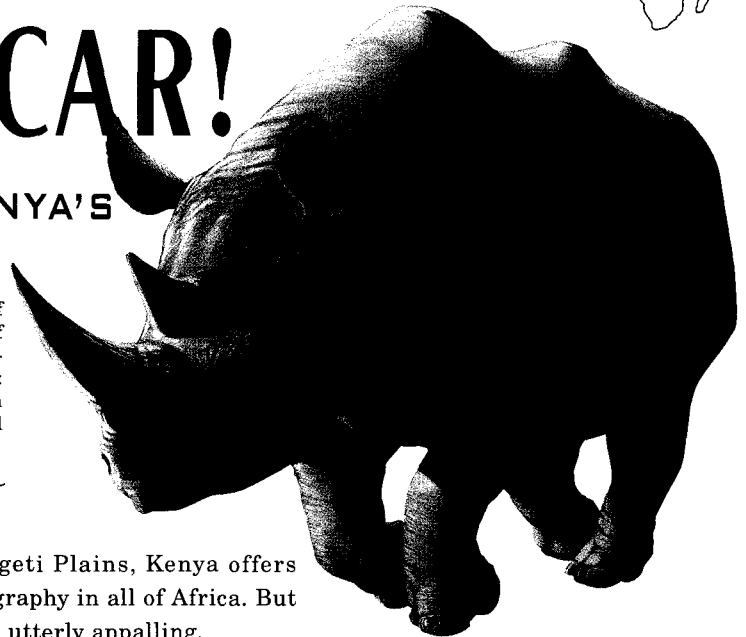


START the CAR! START the CAR!



TRAVELING THROUGH KENYA'S RHINO COUNTRY

Ah, Kenya. What other country, we ask, offers the thrill of dodging maniacal city drivers one moment, and the joy of fleeing a charging rhino the next? Since we just spent several weeks there in the all new Nissan Pathfinder, we'll tell you: Not many. What follows are stories and survival tips from our recent trip through this East African wildlife mecca and sanctuary for driver's ed flunkies.



BLACK RHINO
[*Diceros Bicornis*]

K E N Y A

FROM THE Great Rift Valley to the Serengeti Plains, Kenya offers some of the most beautiful and diverse geography in all of Africa. But let us not mince words: Driving in this country is utterly appalling.

Temperatures are extreme. Roads abysmal. Local motorists deranged. And that's just Nairobi. Assuming you leave the city limits in one piece, you'll then enjoy the additional challenge of numerous animal species that would like nothing better than to make you their next meal. Or, at least, send your car to the body shop for a little fender work.

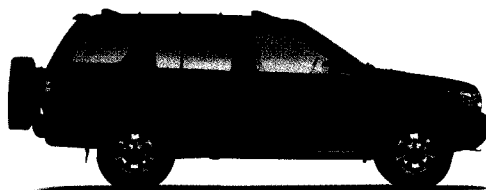
This leaves the safari enthusiast in a bit of a quandary: How does one visit the world's number one wildlife mecca and come home with all limbs still present and accounted for?

As most travel between Kenya's national wildlife parks is by 4WD, it's important—first and foremost—to know which side of the road the local

population drives on. In Kenya, this is simple: They drive on whichever side is smoothest. We generally found this to be our side, and most of our time was spent scanning the horizon for oncoming vehicles, checking to make sure our seat belts were securely fastened, and being thankful for Nissan engineers' thoughtful inclusion of dual airbags.

Assuming you make it beyond the city limits in one piece, your next area of concern will be negotiating the game parks, where the animals rank higher on the food chain than the

humans. We took the Pathfinder to Amboseli National Park, Shaba National Reserve, and a small ranch called Ol Jogi (built by a wealthy European art dealer as a retreat from the drudgery of counting his money all day), but the same rules apply to whichever park you visit: Keep your windows rolled up around lions. Don't get between a mother elephant and her young. And watch out for rhinos—they'll charge anything. The last point was made to us at Ol Jogi, where we learned that although rhinoceros are technically herbivores,



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DRIVING TIP:

Because Kenya was formerly a British colony, one would think motorists would drive on the left side of the road. This would be a dangerous assumption, however, for Kenyans drive on whichever side of the road is smoother. (More often than not, that's YOUR side.)

CATTLE

Cattle are rarely eaten by the Masai as they represent their owner's wealth. (For our Masai readers who may be considering a new automobile, the Pathfinder starts at about 300 cows.)



x 300



some have a distinct fondness for sheet metal. (Fortunately, the three-ton beast was no match for the Pathfinder's nimble handling and we never had to field-test our steel side-door guard beams.)

any attempt to shirk one's financial obligations will result in rocks being hurled in the direction of your vehicle. The Pathfinder's chip-resistant paint notwithstanding, we gladly paid the going rate of 50 Kenyan shillings—about \$1.

With regard to the country's extreme temperatures and bumpy roads, simply adjust the Pathfinder's automatic climate control to a suitably humane temperature and take a few sips off the top of your (bottled, boiled or otherwise purified) water before placing it in the car's cup holders.

Bear these tips in mind and we promise

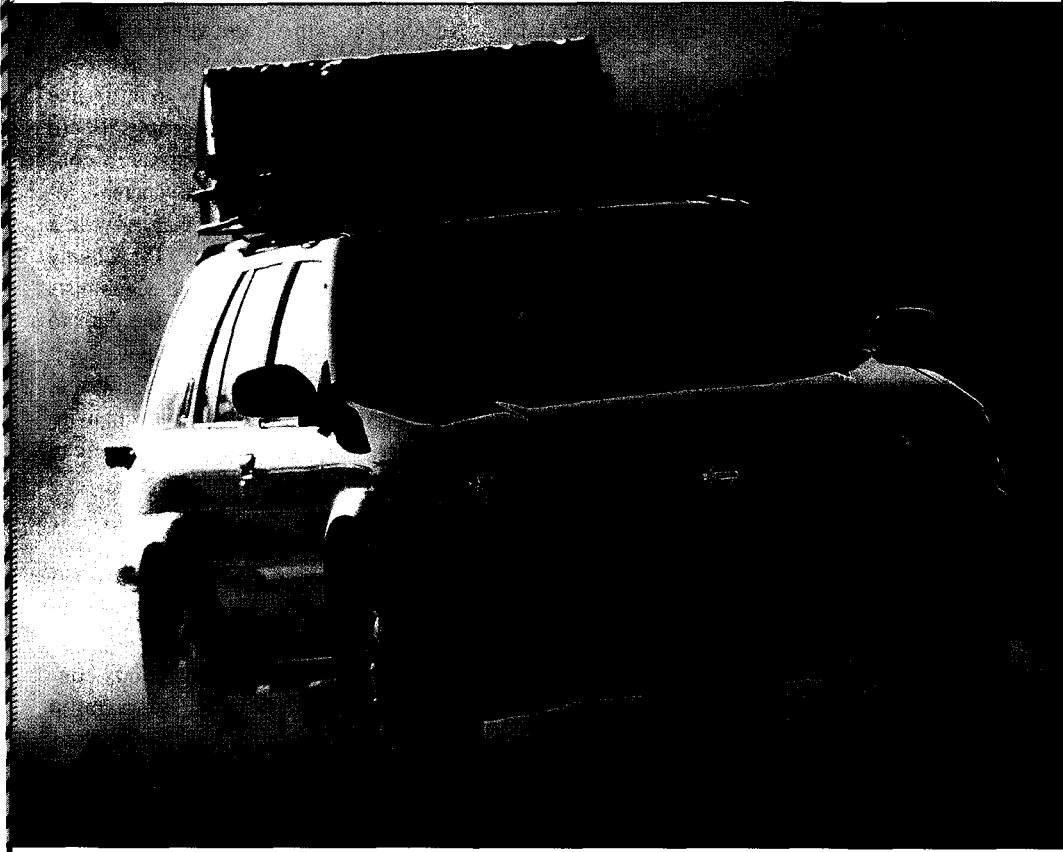
POPULAR SWAHILI EXPRESSIONS:

"Jambo!"..... Hello!
 "U hali gani?"..... How are you?
 "Kuna mtu aliyemia?"..... Is anybody hurt?

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Finally, a few words about Kenya's indigenous people. Kenya is home to over 70 different tribes and, driving through the countryside, you will undoubtedly see vibrantly dressed Masai, Samburu and other tribesmen walking along the roadway. While it is perfectly acceptable to stop for picture-taking, be aware that these people expect to be paid for their modeling services and

your drive through Kenya will be off to a good start. Of course, there's no accounting for the whims of Kenyan motorists or the moods of the local rhinoceros. But that's what separates a drive through Africa from a visit to the petting zoo.

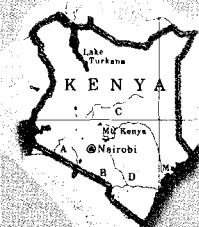
Right?

...

NEXT STOP:

TANZANIA!

...



KENYA'S TOP GAME RESERVES

A. Masai Mara Game Reserve. Located on the northern edge of the Serengeti Plain, this park features vast numbers of migrating herds and the big cats that prey on them.

B. Amboseli Game Reserve. With snow-capped Mt. Kilimanjaro looming in the background, few parks are more picturesque than Amboseli.

C. Shaba National Reserve. Besides hosting nearly all the major big game species, this park is home to colorful Samburu villages where you can watch inspiring tribal dances.

D. Tsavo National Park. At 8,084 square miles, Tsavo boasts some of Africa's largest elephant herds as well as the Mzima Springs oasis, where hippos and crocodiles can be viewed.

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LETTERS

America Growing Old

Peter G. Peterson ("Will America Grow Up Before It Grows Old?" May *Atlantic*), to correct his vision of future "Social Insecurity," would have us all, and the elderly in particular, start sacrificing now. The sacrifices he demands, largely cuts in Social Security and health care and a general reduction of consumption, are based on the false premise that the aging of our population makes them necessary.

By the year 2030—when, proclaimers of the apocalypse tell us, the Old Age and Survivors Trust Fund will "go bankrupt"—we will have only about three people of working age (from twenty to sixty-four) for every one who is sixty-five or older, as against five now. The program could be kept solvent all the way to 2069, according to the fund's trustees, by adding less than 2.2 percent to payroll taxes. Many other allocations of revenue could set this right without draconian payroll-tax increases from the current 12.4 percent to 17 or 22 percent, or "about 35 to 55 percent of every worker's paycheck" if we include Medicare, which Peterson indicates will be necessary if we do not tighten our belts now.

The increase in the proportion of the elderly is a real issue, but it has to be balanced against a decline in the proportion of dependent young. The total ratio of dependency, including young and old, will by the fund's "intermediate" projections have risen only six percent by 2030. That leads to the important and relevant question not of what is in trust funds but of how much output will be available to share among the population. What Peterson and many others seem to forget is that the bread the elderly or anyone else eats must be produced by those who are working; we can't eat money or savings accounts, no matter how much they are increased now or in the future.

Fortunately, though, even the modest

rate of growth of one percent a year in output per worker—no more than our slow growth over the past twenty-two years—would increase total output per worker by 42 percent in thirty-five years. That would be enough to provide for a 33 percent increase in goods and services for every man, woman, and child, regardless of age, even after allowing for a six percent increase in nonworking dependents.

Peterson is right in urging measures to increase growth—a growth in output of two percent per worker would give us 90 percent more for everybody in thirty-five years. But many of his proposals are counterproductive. Forcing us to consume less will not necessarily increase investment; if we don't buy that new car, a form of investment in itself, GM is likely to invest less, not more. And economists increasingly recognize that the path to growth lies in investment in *human* capital—in education, in health, in research, and in providing a safe environment in inner cities and in suburbia where we can all realize our full potential.

Robert Eisner

*William R. Kenan Professor Emeritus
Northwestern University
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Peter G. Peterson's suggestions concerning living wills lack the thoughtful argument of the rest of his article. Peterson asserts that an increase in the use of living wills would reduce the 30 percent of the Medicare budget that is spent in a patient's last year of life. Although beforehand knowledge of our death might be useful, living wills are popular not because they hasten death and reduce medical bills but because they provide unconscious patients with a measure of autonomy. This ranges from taking all means necessary to prolong life to ruling out certain interventions in certain situations. Increasing the number of living wills may not have the effect Peterson desires in the absence of incentives to

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persuade people to opt for less costly intervention.

Recognizing this, Peterson makes an egregious suggestion: that we “perhaps even provide financial incentives to maintain [living wills].” If the purpose of such incentives is to persuade people to forgo costly intervention, little would remain of autonomy. Many people already agonize over the burden they present to their families, which influences their decisions about treatment at the end of life. We should not further encourage people to accept an earlier death because of the cost of medical intervention.

Gregory Fahy
Brighton, Mass.

Peter Peterson’s latest version of “the sky is falling” reflects our impressive proclivity for treating what should by any standard be a national triumph—a longer-lived, healthier, more financially secure elderly population—as an unmitigated disaster. Some of his points are indeed well taken, but his statistical overkill should be a red flag warning the reader to beware of the intermingled *ad hominem*s, personal predilections proffered as revealed truth, and subtle detours around less-supportive evidence.

Consider the Medicare-Medicaid flap, which is less a matter of ill-advised “entitlements” than a symptom of our continuing fundamental health-care distress. That distress could easily be alleviated by a move to some variation of the widely misunderstood—and often deliberately misrepresented—“single-payer” format, with universal coverage based on universal rating, without the distortions created by the appallingly inappropriate promotion of health care as “an attractive investment opportunity.”

Few know that the Congressional Budget Office confirmed that such a program would cover more people for more conditions at lower cost than any alternative.

Edward Marshall Nielsen
Glenview, Ill.

Peter Peterson continues his campaign of many years to cut Social Security and Medicare benefits for seniors already in retirement and to portray seniors as a greedy bunch who are living off the next generation.

Tens of millions of seniors made retirement decisions based on individual

written assurances from the federal government as to the monthly payments they would receive if they chose retirement. To reduce such payments to retirees when they are older, less healthy, and can no longer go back to the jobs they once held is not only a betrayal by the government but also a default pure and simple. Rather than default on millions of seniors, perhaps we should look into another option—defaulting on our debt. After all, sales of federal bills, notes, or bonds to investors are nothing more than a promise to repay. Those promises have no more status than the promise to retirees that they would receive a specific monthly benefit. If one can be broken, so can the other. If we defaulted on even a portion of our debt, we could immediately bring the budget into balance.

Sy Forman
San Diego, Calif.

Peter Peterson’s lucid and alarming article appears to omit one partial solution to the future funding problem which not only has precedent (in the case of Medicare) but also would serve to mitigate the extreme regressive nature of Social Security withholding: do away with the maximum taxable Social Security wages limit and tax individuals a flat Social Security tax no matter what they earn in wages!

As the situation is now, it is the middle middle class (those who barely make the Social Security maximum taxable wage) that subsidizes not only the working poor but also the rich, who presumably have less need for Social Security income to supplement their retirement income. If we can finally admit that the trust fund and pension aspects of Social Security are really nothing more than a tax, why are we not insisting that when the Michael Eisners of the world make \$200 million in wages and compensation in one year, they pay more in Social Security taxes than the middle manager at AT&T who makes \$65,000 a year? Currently, people at both salaries pay about \$4,500 a year in Social Security taxes. Surely we all have an interest in the security, both social and otherwise, of our elderly. Why shouldn’t the burden of aiding the have nots be shared proportionally by the haves and the barely haves in society?

Philip J. Guarco
Upper Montclair, N.J.

Peter Peterson’s focus on the growing forest of Social Security and Medicare entitlements is useful, but myopic with regard to the individual plight of many of the seedlings beneath: modestly paid current wage earners whose disposable income and political flexibility are now being stunted by the regressive funding of such entitlements. Thus when he recommends that all workers be required to contribute four to six percent of their pay above FICA and Medicare payroll taxes, for a total payroll tax of 16 to 18 percent, and acknowledges that such a requirement “would decrease the consumable portion of each paycheck,” he is proposing a fiscal remedy that would be crushing even in combination with his proposed reforms.

Consider, for example, an unmarried self-employed taxpayer earning a near-median income of \$30,000. This taxpayer is not eligible for relief through the earned-income tax credit, and is subject to combined federal taxes of about 26 percent of his or her gross income (15 percent in Social Security and Medicare taxes and 11 percent in income taxes, after a credit for half of the employment tax) and more than seven percent in state income and sales taxes. For such a taxpayer, an additional six percent tax could reduce after-tax income to roughly 60 percent of earnings, or \$18,300. It is very difficult for such a middle-income, self-employed person to eat, pay rent, and run a business on \$1,500 a month, let alone set aside savings for retirement.

Rather than be subjected to greater tax burdens, such earners should be given some tax relief from the regressive payroll tax. Such relief could include creating a floor or standard deduction against the payroll earnings of the self-employed, substantially raising the \$62,700 ceiling for determining the taxable payroll earnings of all wage earners, and limiting that current ceiling to indexed inflation when determining the base for maximum benefits.

Jonathan S. Gellman
New York, N.Y.

Peter G. Peterson replies:

Robert Eisner’s proposal, a permanent hike in the Social Security payroll-tax rate from 12.4 to 14.6 percent, is a solution only if we enact it this year, if we pretend that all the mythical trust-fund

surpluses are genuine savings, if we disregard the huge cash deficits that Social Security would run after the trust fund peaked (more than \$350 billion yearly in 2030, even with Eisner's tax hike), and if we ignore the even larger projected shortfalls for Medicare and Medicaid. The first assumption has a zero probability, and the second is especially astounding. Mr. Eisner claims that the future wealth generated by my proposed increase in savings invested in the real economy (plant, equipment, and R&D) is somehow illusory. We "can't eat money or savings accounts," he says. But here he supposes that the future wealth generated by interest earned on trust-fund assets (in other words, government bonds the interest payments on which merely come straight out of taxpayers' pockets) is somehow genuine.

Mr. Eisner seems to imply that spending less on children will compensate for spending more on the old. This overlooks the monumental fact that the government spends far more on each American aged sixty-five or over than it does on each American under age eighteen. At the federal level, in fact, the ratio is now at least eleven to one. Yes, future working adults could to some extent sustain their own after-tax living standards by spending less on their children or by not having any children at all. In order to keep rewarding the past, apparently, we are to negate our own future. I find this line of reasoning utterly grotesque.

I apologize to Gregory Fahy for the misunderstanding. I propose to offer people a very modest reward for maintaining a living will—period. One survey shows that 89 percent of Americans

think a living will is a good idea, yet only nine percent say they have one. I expect that most people would use such wills to express their natural aversion to costly and painful intervention when there is no reasonable chance of survival. There would certainly be no requirement that they do so.

Edward Nielsen suggests that a single-payer system is a painless cure for our health-care-cost problem—without acknowledging that this solution, like any other, requires that someone consume less. Canada's single-payer system, for

Philip Guarco, like many others, urges us to think of progressive ways to boost future tax revenues. But eventually this approach turns government into a revolving door for funds coming from and going to the same middle- and upper-income households. At some point we have to stop and look at progressive ways to cut future spending increases. That's what my proposed affluence test does.

Jonathan Gellman raises a critical issue: how are median-earning households likely to respond to a plan that requires them to put aside a few percent more of consumable income? Almost by definition, these are households for which we could not provide any sizable direct subsidy (because there are so many of them, the cost would be prohibitive). Yet these are also households whose financial situation no one would call comfortable or easy.

The key, I believe, is to stress what Mr. Gellman overlooks. This new contribution, though mandatory, is not a tax; it is not even what the Clinton Administration, when defending its federal health plan, liked to call a "pre-

mium." From first to last this contribution is personal, common-law property, payable into an interest- or profit-earning fund the full value of which the worker will ultimately consume (or bequeath). The tradeoff is clear: in exchange for consuming somewhat less in the near term—the unavoidable first step in raising savings rates—most Americans will gain the immediate assurance that (as FDR once said, inaccurately, about Social Security) "no damn politician" will ever be able to take away these new contributions and that the system's long-term funding problems have been solved.



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example, has only one eighth as many MRI units per capita as the United States. Does Mr. Nielsen believe that government rationing is, by definition, painless rationing?

Sy Forman is wrong in implying that there is no difference between changing Social Security and defaulting on the national debt. Social Security is not and has never been a property right. Its underlying statute states (and the Supreme Court has agreed) that its benefits can be changed at any time without compensation—and over the past forty years Congress has repeatedly done just that.

THE SEPTEMBER ALMANAC



Arts & Letters

This month Russian children will meet Vlas and Yenik, Znak, and Korzhik—that is, Bert and Ernie, the Count, and the Cookie Monster—as the first of 52 episodes of *Ulitsa Sezam* (“Sesame Street”) airs on Russian TV. The program is the result of a collaboration between indigenous filmmakers and the Children’s Television Workshop, in New York. Although the show will consist partly of dubbed segments from *Sesame Street*’s archives, at least 40 percent of its content will be new: for example, Va-Bank, one of Russia’s leading heavy-metal bands, will sing about washing hands. This is the 15th international co-production of *Sesame Street* and the first in a formerly Communist country.

Government

September 30, by today the government will make its final farm-subsidy payments for the year; for the first time in more than 60 years the payments are divorced from market prices and production controls. Farm policy has long followed the model set under the Depression-era New Deal, one of whose aims was to manage the country’s food supply: Farmers who agreed to plant specific crops were guaranteed a certain price for them, with subsidies making up the difference when market prices were low. They were also sometimes required to leave part of their land idle. However, according to the Federal Agriculture Improvement

and Reform Act of 1996, participating farmers will receive fixed per-bushel payments for a variety of crops of their choosing (with limitations on fruits and vegetables), and may plant as many acres as they like. The payments will decline over a seven-year period and then stop—a schedule intended to usher in a free-market farm economy.

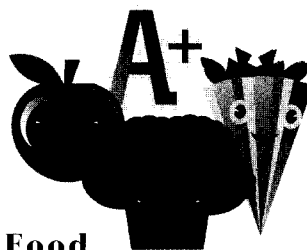
The Skies

Venus, which shines high and bright in the predawn sky this month, is joined on several mornings by the much dimmer Mars, most closely on September 4. 22, at 2:00 P.M. EDT, the Autumnal Equinox occurs: summer ends in the Northern Hemisphere. 26, Full Moon, also known this month as the Harvest or Dying Grass Moon. Tonight brings a total lunar eclipse as well, visible everywhere in the United States except the western edge of Alaska. Totality will begin at about 10:20 P.M. EDT and last about 70 minutes. This will be the last total lunar eclipse visible in North America until the year 2000.



Health & Safety

This month Canada’s health ministers are scheduled to decide on a plan to overhaul the country’s blood system, responsibility for which is currently divided among the Canadian Red Cross and the federal and provincial governments. Tainted blood is believed to have caused 1,200 cases of HIV infection and 12,000 of hepatitis C during the 1980s; there have been no documented cases of infection by this route in the past few years, but public confidence in the system remains low. Reforms are apt to center on the creation of a single agency to administer the blood supply on a national level.



Food

As of this month the free or subsidized school lunches served to 25 million children—roughly half the children in the United States—will become more healthful, as the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National School Lunch Program makes its meals compatible with the government’s 1995 Dietary Guidelines for Americans. Lunches will henceforth provide a third of the recommended daily allowances of protein, calories, and various nutrients, and will comply with suggested limits on cholesterol and fat. The USDA plans to increase the variety of foods it buys and distributes to participating schools, adding more fruit, vegetables, and grains. It has also developed 53 new recipes, primarily more-healthful versions of such old standbys as spaghetti with meat sauce and macaroni and cheese.

Q&A

Why do letters as well as numbers appear on telephone buttons—and why do the letters usually begin on the second button? Early telephones had no buttons or dials; callers would simply tell the operator the number of the party they wanted. Telephone “numbers” actually started with letters—generally, the first few letters of the street, neighborhood, or town where the local telephone office was found. When AT&T first started using dials, in 1919, the equipment available could not differentiate between the single

pulse of a one being dialed and the sound of the telephone being hung up, unless the phone was already in “dialing mode”; if the first digit dialed was a one, the call would disconnect. As a result, letters could not be assigned to the first space on the dial. When all-digit telephone numbers came into being, in the 1960s, letters were kept on the dial so that people would not have to relearn existing numbers. In recent years technology has revived and even expanded the need for letters on the “dial.” Because many voice-mail systems require callers to punch in the first few letters of their party’s last name, Q and Z—originally omitted because few place names begin with them—are now sometimes included on business phones.

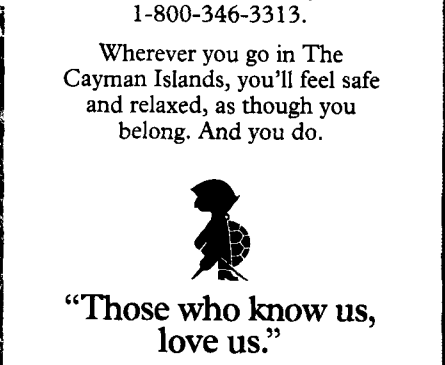
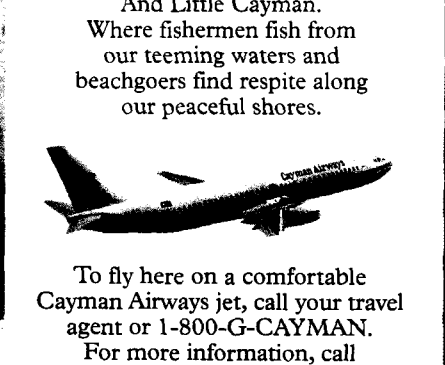
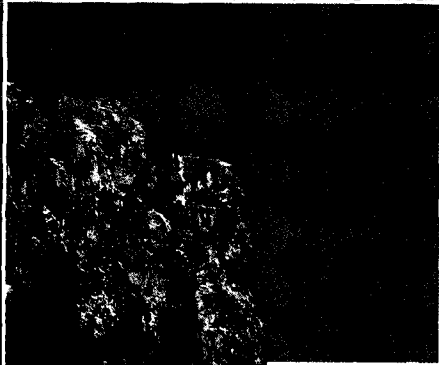
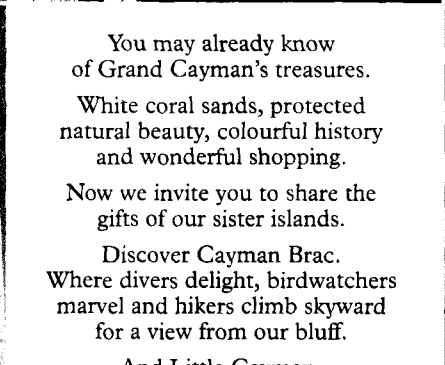
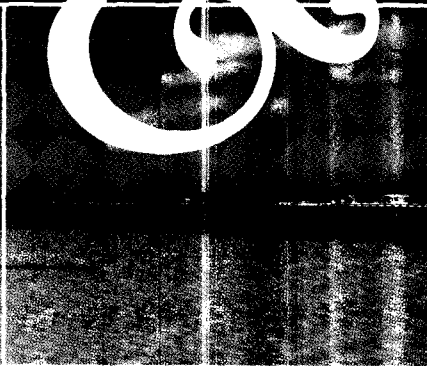


75 Years Ago

Cornelia J. Cannon, writing in the September, 1921, issue of *The Atlantic Monthly*: “The major indictment against philanthropy is that it has ignored the opportunities democracy offers for reforms from within. It has distracted our minds and attention from community responsibility for the removal of social defects. . . . Its reforms have tended to be superficial, because it has everywhere selected for its leaders those interested in philanthropy, but not in democracy. The typical lover of his kind will pour out money for the starving Chinese though he may hesitate to contribute to campaign expenses for public-school associations. The novice can catch the thrill of teaching folk-dancing to the tenement-house child or distributing bread tickets to the poor; but an offer to pay the expenses of a board of health ‘clean-up campaign’ requires imagination of a different order.”



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The E Word

"We are not at war with Egypt. We are in a state of armed conflict."

—ANTHONY EDEN DURING THE SUEZ CRISIS, 1956

DRIVING along a highway in southern New Mexico not long ago, I came within the gravitational pull of a truck stop, and was ineluctably drawn in. This was not one of those mom-and-pop "truck stops," so prevalent in the East, where cars outnumber semis and the restaurant has a children's menu. This was the real thing, lit up in the desert darkness like an outpost in *Mad Max*, visible from six counties. Cars in the parking lot looked like Piper Cubs at O'Hare. It was the kind of place where tough men sit at the counter and call the waitress "doll," which she likes, and order flesh and starch while they smoke, leaning over the counter, a crescent of lower back visible between pants and shirt. Outside, their mounts hungrily lap up petrochemicals.

In a truck stop such as this the aesthetic pinnacle is typically reached in the design of the men's-room condom dispenser, and here I was not disappointed. Taking up nearly one full wall was a kind of Ghent Altarpiece of prophylaxis, each glass panel displaying its own delicately crafted vignette: a yellow sunset through palm trees, a couple strolling lazily along a beach, a herd of galloping white stallions, a flaxen-haired succubus in gauzy silhouette—exquisite examples of late-novecento venereal iconography.

Above it hung a sign saying FAMILY PLANNING CENTER.

■ ■ ■

Robert Burchfield, for many years the editor of *The Oxford English Dictionary*, once observed

that "a language without euphemisms would be a defective instrument of communication." By this criterion, at least, contemporary American English cannot be judged defective. All epochs, of course, have employed euphemisms both to downplay and to amplify: to camouflage the forbidden, to dress up the

unseemly and the unpleasant, and, like Chaucer's Wife of Bath, to find genteel expression for some earthy fun. Some periods have specialized. The eighteenth century is famous as a time of inventive sexual innuendo and political circumlocution (consult almost any passage in *Gulliver's Travels*). The Victorians were linguistically circumspect not only about sex and the human body but also about money and death. But in the late twentieth century euphemism has achieved what it never achieved before: it has become a fit medium for the expression of just about everything. Putty as it is in the hands of its employer, bereft (unlike irony) of any solid core, euphemism can take on almost any task at all. It is the characteristic literary device of our time—as much a hallmark of the era as were inflated honorifics in fifth-century Rome.

The one thing that all euphemisms have in common is their willingness to show themselves in public—sometimes with audacity. A press release arrived recently from the Fur Information Council of America, and it contained this sentence: "Twice as many animals are killed each year in animal shelters and pounds as are used by the fur industry." The word "partition" was politically unacceptable in the Dayton Agreement, signed by the warring parties in the former Yugoslavia, and so the agreement does not employ it; but what might the term "inter-entity boundary" mean? A spokesperson for the United Nations, asked to explain the routine disappearance of millions of dollars' worth of computers, vehicles, and cash whenever UN forces withdraw from a locale, blamed a phenomenon she called "end-of-mission *tristesse*."

Most euphemisms, though, do not call such attention to themselves; we slide right over them. Some weeks ago I decided to spend a day with the euphemism detector set on high, just to see what kinds of things turned up in newspapers and magazines, on radio and television, and in ordinary conversation. Here is part of the harvest: "deer management" for the enlistment of paid sharpshooters; "remedial college skills" for reading; "traffic-calming measures" for speed bumps; "comparative ads" for attack ads; "legacy device" for an obsolete computer; "assistance devices" for hearing aids; "firm," in the parlance of produce merchants, for underripe; "hand-check," in the parlance of basketball players, for shove; "peace en-





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forcement" for combat; "hard to place" for disturbed; "growth going backwards" for recession (itself a euphemism); "post-verdict response" for riot; "cult favorite" for low-rated; and "gated community" for affluent residential compound with private security. (Imagine a sign outside Windsor Castle 500 years ago: A GATED COMMUNITY.) This is but a modest sample, and I have not included any euphemisms ending with "syndrome" or "challenged."

The newest category of euphemism—which takes the idea into unexplored metaphysical territory—is one in which a euphemistic term is invented for a word or idea that actually requires none, the euphemism thereby implicitly back-tainting the original word or idea itself. In its most widespread manifestation this kind of euphemizing takes its form from such locutions for unutterables as "the F word" and, in a racial context, "the N word." Thus, during his race for the presidency against Michael Dukakis, George Bush castigated his opponent for being a liberal by bringing up what he called "the L word." Since then we have had "the O word," referring to orphanages (or, at the other demographic extreme, to old age); "the T word," referring to taxes; "the U word" (unions); "the V word" (vouchers); and "the W word" (welfare). William Safire, who briefly took note of this phenomenon in its infancy, during the 1988 campaign, predicted that it would "probably peter out in a few years, after we go through the alphabet and begin to get confused about what a given letter is supposed to signify." In fact the euphemistic abecedarium is now both complete and several meanings deep, and seems to be evincing considerable staying power. The cheap mass production of E words has apparently proved irresistible.

■ ■ ■

On balance, are euphemisms bad for us? One school of thought holds that a truly healthy, stable, psychologically mature society would have no need for euphemisms. Those who subscribe to this school would hold further, with George Orwell, that political euphemism "is designed to make lies sound truthful and murder respectable, and to give an appearance of solidity to pure wind." They might add that the emergence of the new genre of faux euphemism is particularly insidious, in that it implies a kind of equivalence among the concepts or terminology represented by letters of the alphabet—as if "the L word" and "the T word" really did belong in the same category as "the N word." There is something to be said for all these points, the last one in particular. I'm surely not alone in observing that the phrase "the N word" has lately come into the mainstream, as the N word itself never could again.

A second school of thought about euphemisms might be called the white-blood-cell school; it holds that yes, an elevated count might well be a sign of mild or serious pathology—but it's also a sign that a natural defense mechanism has kicked in. By and large my sympathies lie with the white-blood-cell school. Although euphemism sets some to spluttering about its deceitfulness, I suspect that few people are really deceived—that, indeed, the transparent motives and awkward semantics only un-

dermine the euphemist's intention. When a nuclear warhead is referred to as "the physics package," when genocide is referred to as "ethnic cleansing," when wife-beating is referred to as "getting physical"—in all these cases the terminology trains a spotlight on the truth.

Philosophers and linguists will argue the matter for years to come. In the meantime, though, it might be useful to begin acquiring a database of euphemisms by monitoring their prevalence in our national life. The model would be the Consumer Price Index.

The Consumer Price Index does not, of course, keep track of inflation by watching trends in the prices of everything. It focuses on a "basket" of major economic goods and services: food, clothing, rent, oil and gas, interest rates, and so on. With euphemisms, too, a handful of big items account for a disproportionate share of all euphemistic activity. Thus we might devise a preliminary formula with a basket of concepts including sex, God, money, politics, social pathology, bodily functions, disease, and death (along with, perhaps, a few minor bellwether indicators such as euphemisms for criminal behavior by juveniles and for lack of achievement in school). Logoplasticians, as those who study euphemisms might be called, would follow the emergence of promising synonyms in all these areas, producing at regular intervals a Semantic Engineering Index, or SEI.

Some might anticipate that in a society like ours the SEI would show gains quarter after quarter. I am not sure that this would happen in the aggregate: a macro-euphemistic view of history shows significant ups and downs over time. But in any event internal shifts would be abundant and revealing. Euphemisms are fragile organisms, surprisingly sensitive to the outside environment. Frequently they come to embody so fully the thing being euphemized that they themselves demand replacement. H. W. Fowler's *Modern English Usage* (Second Edition) shows how "toilet" is but the latest in a series of progressively superseded euphemisms—"water-closet," "latrine," "privy," "jakes"—going back many centuries. (Last year a Methodist singles group, recognizing the danger of euphemistic succession and hoping to stave it off, held a retreat with the theme "Intimacy Is Not a Euphemism for Sex." Good luck.) Some euphemisms eventually attract such knowing derision that their useful life is abbreviated. This was the case, for instance, with the term "revenue enhancement" as a stealthy substitute for "higher taxes." Other euphemisms, such as "custodial engineer" and "sandwich technician," pass from the moment of coinage into a state of ironic suspension without ever experiencing an intermediate condition of utility.

Given the avidity with which professional lexicographers today comb through books and periodicals for evidence of emerging and fading terminology, compiling a Semantic Engineering Index would no doubt be quite simple. And popular acceptance of the idea of "leading euphemistic indicators" would come easily. "The SEI rose three tenths of a point this month, paced by a rise in the T word and public jitters about peace enforcement." I see a cult favorite already. ☞



In the Land of Conservative Women

A diverse group of woman activists, including many young people and small-business owners, are bringing new energy to the Republican Party

MOVED by a sense of panic in the wake of the Republican takeover of Congress, American feminist leaders gathered in Washington, D.C., last February to lay the groundwork for the counterrevolution against Republican assaults on abortion rights, affirmative action, and funding for a wide range of social programs. "This is a Congress that has harmed women too much," Eleanor Holmes Norton, the Democratic congressional delegate from the District of Columbia, told the crowd at Feminist Expo '96, urging that the Re-

by Elinor Burkett

publicans "be targeted for retirement in return." Expo organizers announced that they would launch an ambitious female-voter-registration drive designed to capitalize on the gender gap—the imbalance between American women's tendency to vote for Democrats and the growing preference of American men for Republicans. By exploiting that gap, which was as high as 19 percentage points last spring, they hope to send enough Republicans packing to give control of Congress back to the Democrats. Meanwhile, across town at the

★ ☆ ★
*Above, April Lassiter:
congressional aide, alternative
rocker, Republican*

offices of the Republican National Committee, the co-chair Evelyn McPhail and her staff were also plotting a mobilization of the women's vote—to a very different end, and in accordance with a very different and less well publicized set of statistics. Whatever the long-term survey numbers indicate for women in general, in the 1994 election most of the *white* women who voted cast their ballots for the Republican Party. Women under fifty of whatever race are evenly divided in their party identification; women under thirty are actually leaning slightly Republican. Leaving party affiliation and race aside, two women identify themselves as conservative for every one who identifies herself as liberal.

McPhail and others have spent the past several years attempting to make their party more attractive to women. She and a group of prominent Republican women—including the columnist and activist Arianna Huffington; Marilyn Quayle, the wife of the former Vice President; and New York's lieutenant governor, Betsy McCaughey Ross—have flown from state to state conducting workshops designed to encourage Republican women to get off the defensive. Last October, four months before Feminist Expo, Republican women held their own gathering, the Women Leaders Summit, which brought together 600 women chosen by members of Congress. Republican women have also formed a counter to the liberal feminist political-action committee Emily's List. It is called RENEW—the Republican Network to Elect Women.

During the 1994 election campaign Newt Gingrich created a "buddy system" linking female Republican members of Congress and female congressional candidates around the country. When he rose to the speaker's office, he appointed women to serve, for the first time, as the clerk of the House and as the House counsel. Jan Meyers, of Kansas, and Nancy Johnson, of Connecticut, became the first women to chair congressional committees in nearly two decades. Representatives Susan Molinari, of New York, and Barbara Vucanovich, of Nevada, were elected to the Republican leadership. And Gingrich also began to

meet biweekly with the Republican women in the House—one of the few regular meetings he keeps on his calendar. In a recent interview Gingrich, who went so far as to describe himself as a feminist, spoke at length about the opportunities he was trying to create for women and contrasted his efforts with those of the previous leadership. “It’s very hard to change institutions,” he said, “especially where you have real power. These are not cosmetic changes. Ask the Democrats: Why does a Pat Schroeder [of Colorado] leave here as the senior woman never having been a chair? How can that happen?”

Gingrich likened his role to that of a head coach. “What they needed,” he said of his female party colleagues, “was two things. They needed coaching. They needed somebody to say to them, you know, if you want to get on Ways and Means, here’s how you do it—because what women don’t tend to have in any large corporate structure is a network and a pattern of relating that allows them to teach each other to rise. The second thing they needed was a fair level of opportunity, because of the mathematics of their numbers.” (One thing he discovered, Gingrich said, was that “women in fact are collectively more energetic per person than males are. They are also, frankly, probably slightly brighter. It’s true. The kind of woman that has gotten this far has worked harder to get here than the average male who’s gotten here.”)

The 104th Congress vilified by Eleanor Holmes Norton is the most heavily female Congress in the nation’s history, bolstered by the election of seven freshman Republican women who epitomize the kinds of American women that the party is courting. Linda Smith, of Washington, who now has two grown children, couldn’t afford to attend college. She

gave beauty school a shot, and eventually wound up working for H&R Block. Her colleague from Idaho, Helen Chenoweth, a single mother of two, started her own business after her husband left her. Barbara Cubin, of Wyoming, raised two sons and managed a medical office before making a bid for the Wyoming state legislature, and from there a bid for the House. And Sue Kelly, of New York, not only took care of four children but tried a little of everything in the work force, from rape-crisis counseling to hospital administration to medical research, and even owned a flower shop.

The 1994 election increased the number of Republican women in Congress to twenty, even as it decreased the number of Democratic women in Congress from forty to thirty-five. Republicans have depth when it comes to women: Today forty-five of the eighty-three women holding statewide executive office are Republicans. The country’s only female governor, Christine Todd Whitman, of New Jersey, is a Republican, as are eleven of the nineteen woman lieutenant governors. While Democratic recruiters are scouring the country looking for women to run for high office, Republicans brag that women are coming to them. McPhail points to the Republican roster: three women vying for nomination to run for the governorship of Washington, seven women running for Senate seats, and dozens running in congressional races from Mississippi to Connecticut to Nevada.

This women’s revolution has overtaken the Republican Party virtually unnoticed. Although many of the party’s traditional female supporters—the “Ultra-suede-and-pearls crowd,” as they’re sometimes known—have cooled in their allegiance, finding themselves uncomfortable with the party’s anti-abortion platform, a new group of women has seized control of Republican women’s organizations, and of county and state Republican committees. Twenty percent of state party chairs are women, and the number will rise as women continue to take over positions at the local level. Half the state Republican committee members in Massachusetts are now women. So are 44 percent of Republican county officials in Mississippi. Christian women who long avoided national politics are now working as lobbyists on Capitol Hill. Baby Boom women who run their

own small businesses—a rapidly growing but largely overlooked force in the American economy—say they are eschewing liberalism as an indulgence they can no longer afford. In smaller numbers, African-American women fed up with crime, drugs, and violence are translating their community’s traditionally conservative social values into conservative political activism.

In Washington and in state capitals, at party caucuses and other gatherings, Republican women are there in strength. They are running the National Rifle Association (the president, the executive director, and the chief lobbyist are all women), defending the rights of militia members on the floor of the House of Representatives, and governing cities from San Diego to Orlando. They see themselves as representing a challenge to feminist assumptions that “real” women are necessarily liberal.

I became aware of these people as I watched the Republican revolution get under way in Washington: twentysomething women cheered Newt Gingrich the way women of my generation cheered Eugene McCarthy; a woman, Mary Parker Lewis, was running the presidential campaign of the conservative black Republican Alan Keyes; lobbyists for Concerned Women of America, a predominantly Christian group that calls itself the largest women’s public-policy organization in the country, complained that social issues had been excluded from the Contract With America. These women were more remote from me and my experience than were, say, woman journalists and academics in Paris, Tokyo, or Buenos Aires. Raised by liberal Jewish parents, I came of age during the 1960s. Everyone I knew criticized the government, but always for being too inactive, never for being too big. Everyone I knew believed in affirmative action, rigid separation of Church and State, and, later, gay rights. In the 1970s, when the issue arose, no one I knew seriously considered the possibility that the availability of abortion should not be an inviolable right.

I was aware that there were people who disagreed with these views, but I also knew that they were the pawns and playthings of the “ruling class,” and were indifferent to the plight of the poor, intolerant of diversity, and willing to level en-

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the country for women
to run for office.
Republicans brag that
women come to them.*

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makes me
eat a bug?

what if I'm
sick of all the
paperwork?

what if something
happens on
vacation?

what if?

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tire countries to maintain American hegemony. I didn't actually know any of this firsthand, of course, because America is not so much a heterogeneous society as a patchwork of homogeneous societies living together cheek by jowl yet remarkably isolated from one another.

I entered the land of conservative women, then, with the interest and trepidation of an anthropologist visiting a tribe she suspects might include headhunters. Six months later I emerged with my head, and my politics, intact. I am still not persuaded that the federal government is an evil empire, that affirmative action is unjustifiable, or that paradise will be gained by giving local government a lot more control. I am, however, persuaded that conservative women are too substantive to dress anyone's window, and I know that they are tough and principled. They are also as diverse a company as the liberals I have known all my life.

NO one had ever before tried throwing a big party for young conservative women. But even before the RSVPs started coming in, April Lassiter was certain that the Eighteenth Street Lounge, the club she and some friends had rented in Washington, D.C., would be as packed on their Thursday night as on any Saturday night. The invitation—an entreaty to “Merge Right”—had been an immediate hit.

When the Republicans swept into power on Capitol Hill, scores of young conservatives were suddenly emboldened, sure that they now represented the cutting edge—socially as well as politically. These were Hill rats—that horde of ambitious, idealistic, and underpaid young people who work as press secretaries and floor assistants in congressional offices, as researchers at think tanks and public-relations companies, and as rising associates at law firms and in special-interest lobbies. They see themselves as a generation wresting the Republican Party away from the country-club set.

“For us, there’s been no galvanizing event to connect us to the government; therefore we don’t trust or need it,” says Kellyanne Fitzpatrick, who at twenty-nine runs her own firm, The Polling Company, and sees herself as one of the nation’s only truly conservative pollsters. She is also a regular election com-

mentator for CNN. “We grew up in car seats while Ma and Dad pumped gas on odd and even days. We watched *Challenger* blow up. We were the children of no-fault divorces. When I was seventeen, I watched Geraldine Ferraro accept the vice-presidential nomination at the Democratic convention, and thought it was interesting. Then I listened to Ronald Reagan and saw someone four times my age, of a different gender, and from a different coast, who was communicating a message that appealed to me as a young adult. Being a liberal is no longer fashionable. It went out with bell-bottoms. We’re never going to be Stepford Democrats. Most of us make Ayn Rand look like a leftist.”

For the party that Thursday evening hundreds of young women, and a surprisingly large number of men, lined up outside the front door. By 8:00 P.M. a top assistant to Phyllis Schlafly, the conservative activist (and Equal Rights Amendment opponent), was poised on the edge of a couch in a skirt that barely covered what her mentor would undoubtedly call her “private parts.” She puffed on a cigar as she bantered about the importance of abstinence-oriented sex education in the schools.

Genevieve Wood, a producer and talk-show host for Paul Weyrich’s Political Newstalk Network, wore a button that read *NO LEFT TURN*. At twenty-seven, she is still trying to figure out how, in her view, the Republicans got it wrong on key social issues for so long. “I always say to my parents, ‘You complain about LBJ and the Great Society, but where were you? Where were your answers?’” What does she think of older Republicans? “So many represent the status quo.” The Federation of Republican Women, the mainstream Republican women’s club? “Dinosaurs. We don’t need tea parties. We need to be tough.” For Wood, working at the network is a relief after a stint at NBC. “I was the token conservative,” she says, laughing. “One girl told me I was the first girl she’d ever met who was pro-life and still cool. It’s so strange. They didn’t know we existed.”

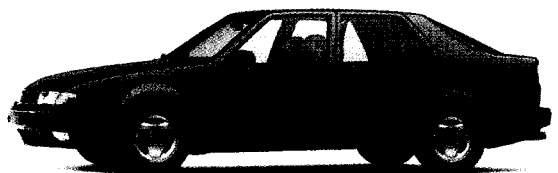
The standout of the evening was April Lassiter, twenty-seven, who by day works as a policy adviser to the House majority whip, Tom DeLay, and by night sings in a band that plays alternative

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*"I don't like any word
that defines me fore-
most as a woman. I'm
a conservative who
happens to be female."*

rock. In a silvery-pink mini-dress and dark makeup she looked like a 1990s version of the 1960s chanteuse Petula Clark, whose name means nothing to her. Her only other even vaguely 1960s characteristic is her certainty that she has the cure for all of America's ailments. For her, issues like abortion (which she would outlaw entirely except to save the life of the mother) and affirmative action (which she finds demeaning) have never been rallying cries. They belong to some other generation. What she and her friends believe in is less important than what they don't believe in: government. In their world no one questions that the federal government has replaced the Soviet Union as the enemy.

The "Merge Right" party was in fact a fundraiser thrown by Lassiter and her friends for an existing group, the Independent Women's Forum, a think tank created in 1992 by and for women who found themselves politically homeless—women who believe that the important feminist battles have been won. For them, the liberal National Organization of Women was definitely out. Concerned Women for America and other traditional conservative women's groups weren't much better: too Christian, too focused on abortion. IWF members fall somewhere in the vast ideological expanse between Gloria Steinem and Phyllis Schlafly. The group's monthly speakers' series in Washington attracts dozens of professional women who are rethinking their attitudes toward affirmative action (an article in the IWF's quarterly magazine was titled "That's Not a White Man, That's My Husband"), the wisdom of so much emphasis on federal violence-against-women programs ("What about violence by women?" the magazine asked), and the forced integration of same-sex schools (which they are convinced will harm women's colleges and

schools). Mostly they are intent on providing an alternative female voice in the national discussion. "Are you tired of the nonsense you hear from people who pretend to speak for all women?" an IWF brochure asks. "Are you sick of being told that you are a 'victim' of the men in your life?"

The IWF has perhaps received as much press for the attacks leveled against it by liberal feminists as it has for its work arguing for the Virginia Military Institute's right to exclude women (a cause that last summer met a considerable obstacle in the form of the U.S. Supreme Court) and its advocacy of mandatory testing of newborns for HIV. The *Washington Feminist Faxnet*, a weekly newsletter, has described the IWF as "a pack of she-wolves." The writer Susan Faludi has called its members "pod feminists" and described that organization and sister conservative groups as "a media-assisted invasion of the body of the women's movement: the Invasion of the Feminist Snatchers."

At the "Merge Right" party a scattering of older conservative women circulated through the crowd, but they seemed somewhat out of place. Even in such ideologically consonant circles a generation gap is glaringly obvious. Thirty years earlier old leftists looked with disapproval on the young upstarts cutting their teeth on Marx, Gramsci, and C. Wright Mills. The young people seemed undisciplined, arrogant, too willing to offend the wider society. Young conservative activists elicit strikingly parallel reactions from some of their ideological forerunners. Christian women often find the young women's short skirts inappropriate, a flaunting of sexuality that borders on the amoral. Secular conservatives are less shocked by the flaunting than amused by the flouting of liberal presuppositions about what conservatives wear, how they dance, what they do with their free time. Looking around at the "Merge Right" crowd in a room filled with smoke and long exposed legs, Ricky Silberman, a former vice-chair of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, kept shaking her head. "In my day young Republicans didn't look like this," she said. "If they had, maybe we would have liked them."

The young women carry different historical baggage. The middle-aged mem-

bers of the Independent Women's Forum and others of their age grew up at a time when America was discovering its own injustices, and many of them still struggle with a pair of long-held liberal assumptions: that equal protection under the law can mean protecting groups rather than just individuals, and that government inaction tends to breed or perpetuate social injustice. The younger women, in contrast, came of age at the height of identity politics, with the culture of victimhood being explored endlessly on daytime television. They have emerged as rampant individualists who have traded the rhetoric of group empowerment for the philosophy of self-empowerment. It is perhaps testimony to the success of feminism that most of them, like April Lassiter, have never seriously considered the possibility that their options might be limited.

The generation gap seems to be widest on abortion, which older Republican women support to a greater extent than do the young. Many IWF members, whose view of the abortion debate was shaped by the debate over a woman's right to control her own body, are dismayed by what they perceive as an absence of any sense among younger conservatives of what it meant to be a woman in America prior to *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court decision that established a woman's constitutional right to have an abortion. For them—as for many older women, whether conservative or liberal—the concept that young college-educated women could be anti-choice is so implausible that they tend to assume the younger women will grow out of that opinion as life circumstances teach them about the moral complexities of women's lives. Others regard the anti-abortion rhetoric as the political posturing of the young. But women like Kellyanne Fitzpatrick resolutely beg to differ. For them, the central issue is not privacy—a woman's right to control her own body—but rather the reality of visibly moving fetuses that they believe to be fully human. "You can't appeal to us through our wombs," Fitzpatrick says. "We're pro-life. The fetus beat us. We grew up with sonograms. We know life when we see it."

For these young conservative women, abortion is not even a women's issue. Indeed, they dismiss the very concept of "women's issues" as a vestige of some

paleolithic reality. "I agree with the original idea of feminism, with equal opportunity," Lassiter says, "but it went too far. There is no such thing as 'women's issues.' Men worry about their families and kids, and women worry about the economy and national defense."

In fact, although Lassiter and her friends support the Independent Women's Forum, some of them don't quite understand why they need a women's group at all. "I don't like any word that defines me foremost as a woman," Lassiter says. "I'm a conservative who happens to be female."

"ARE you a *real* Republican?" It's often the first question Judy Jefferson is asked when she drives from town to town in the Mississippi Delta. A dozen possible answers occur to her. Among them:

Are you trying to suggest that an African-American woman can't be a real Republican?

Did black people fight and die in the civil-rights movement just for the right to be Democrats?

Do you seriously want me to be a member of a party that brought us George Wallace, Orval Faubus, and Bull Connor?

Depending on the moment, she is capable of uttering any of those responses. Jefferson, a forty-three-year-old marketing consultant, lives in Democrat country—Mississippi's Second District, which was carved out to ensure the election of a black representative to the U.S. House. She threw her hat into the ring to represent it as a Republican. To her, this was a logical political statement.

"People are starting to recognize that the country is out of control, that people are out of control, that the government is out of control," she explains. "We've reached the point where people—common folks, black people, white people, rich, poor—want to return to the strong moral values that have sustained us in troubled times. The Democratic Party has completely moved away from any discussion of Christian values, of morality, of rights and wrongs. That puts it totally out

of step with the way people think. Conservative means doing a lot with a little. Black folks have been doing that forever. We're natural conservatives."

According to opinion surveys, Jefferson is not far off the mark. The most recent poll of the nation's black community by the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, a Washington think tank, found that two thirds of black Americans identified themselves as either conservative or moderate. Almost half—nearly the same percentage as in the general population—favor school vouchers. And according to one Gallup poll, nearly 60 percent of blacks favor the death penalty. Most blacks disapprove of mandatory busing, and two thirds feel that affirmative action needs to be reformed. Despite such conservative attitudes, black Ameri-



Vikki Buckley: former welfare recipient and typist, now secretary of state of Colorado



cans remain overwhelmingly loyal to the Democratic Party: more than 80 percent identify themselves as Democrats or as independents who favor the Democrats. Among black women the percentage is even higher.

Judy Jefferson decided to try to turn those numbers around in what happens to be the second poorest congressional district in the nation. For weeks before the March 12 primary she and her husband drove the back roads of Mississippi in a powder-blue 1985 Pontiac Bonneville that had one side smashed in,

preaching the gospel of independence, self-reliance, and old-fashioned morality. "The government is supposed to support the citizenry, not deliver life on a silver platter," she told congregations at black churches and white churches, and audiences at schools and community centers. "I believe that any empowerment of local communities is the rebuilding of America." Everywhere she went, the fundamental message was the same: "We need to rebuild America one family at a time."

Jefferson's was a crusade as much as a campaign. From the statehouse, in Jackson, she followed winding roads so far out into the country "that they have to pump daylight in," speaking at churches, arguing with civic groups, shaking hands at country stores. It wasn't enough. The \$3,000 she raised, and the weeks of hard work she put in, got her only 20 percent of the Republican primary vote. She suspects that Democrats, who can vote in the Republican primary in Mississippi, had been organized to vote for her opponent in order to keep her out of the general election. "Everybody knows that the only person who can beat the Democrats in this district is a woman or a sports hero," she said shortly before the election. This wasn't just wishful thinking: polls indicate that independents nationwide trust female Re-

publican candidates more than they trust their male counterparts—and are more likely to vote for them.

That is why Evelyn McPhail, at the Republican National Committee, is working to encourage candidates like Jefferson. McPhail and her co-workers have found a cadre of black women committed to persuading members of their community that they're in the wrong party. Their dean is Vikki Buckley, the secretary of state of Colorado, a forty-seven-year-old black woman who was embraced by the Colorado Federation of Republican Women the minute she announced her intention to run for office. Buckley was, in the federation's view, the ideal candidate. When she talked about welfare reform, she had instant

credibility, because she had once spent eighteen months on welfare. When she talked about education, she spoke of her battles to ensure that her three sons got no mixed messages about right and wrong. She had started in the office of the secretary of state as a clerk-typist and worked her way up, and thus was the perfect symbol of a new Republican Party in which members don't have to be embarrassed by the blue blood coursing through their leaders' veins.

Buckley admits that she, too, spent years thinking that the Republican Party was a rich white men's club: no minorities need apply. "I didn't wake up one morning and decide to become a Republican," she explains. "But the Democrats are too flighty. People in the African-American community care about family unity, education, a decrease in taxes. For twenty years they haven't believed in these social programs. They gripe and moan about politics, yet they keep that ugly little D behind their names. That's got to change."

Most black liberals find anathema any support in their community for Republicans. But Nona Brazier, of Seattle, the former chair of the King County Republican Central Committee and a candidate for Washington's governorship this year, regards the knee-jerk, pro-Democratic response as nonsense. Brazier, who runs a company that hauls trash, is a member of the board of a group called Industrial Strength Women, an organization for Washington State businesswomen. It is patronizing, Brazier says, to assume that black self-determination is dependent on white good will—that blacks will wither without government help. All that the Democratic social-welfare state has succeeded in doing, in Brazier's view, is to make blacks dependent. "Dubois's strategy of litigate, legislate, and integrate might have helped the talented tenth," she says, "but it didn't do much for the rest of the community. Malcolm X was right when he said, 'A dollar has to change hands six times before it leaves the community, or the community dies.' People need commerce, not programs, and

black leadership has ignored that basic principle of nation-building. The principles of Kwanzaa are family, self-determination, and cooperation. That's my route to rebuilding the community, and that's the Republican message."

IF 1994 was the year of the angry white male, 1996 may turn out to be the year of the anxious white female. Overwhelmed by bills, worried about their kids, afraid of violence, women are even uncertain, polls say, about whether they will be able to put food on the table when they grow old. Women who are homemakers feel devalued and unappreciated, and at the same time, they feel insecure about their husbands' jobs. According to a *U.S. News & World Report* survey, almost two thirds of women who

campaign than men do. Women today are afraid of Republican budget cuts, it is said. They want to protect the right to have an abortion. They like Hillary and think Bill cares. They hate Newt.

Other observers urge caution. "This is probably the most important segment of the electorate in 1996," says Stanley Greenberg, a Democratic pollster. "And it is absolutely up for grabs." Both parties know that Greenberg is correct. The gender gap, after all, has come about not so much because women have deserted the Republicans as because men have abandoned the Democrats. The women's vote for Republicans has remained remarkably constant—about 47 percent—for fifteen years. Men have moved to the right, and there is no indication that this trend is about to be reversed.

There will be no contest for certain groups of women: Democrats will reel in single and college-educated women; Republicans can count on the Christian right, which is heavily female, and on married women, especially homemakers. But the anxious women—blue-collar women, who are traditionally Democrats but whose refusal to vote in 1994 helped to bring about the Democrats' loss of control of Congress; and the growing ranks of female small-business owners—aren't so easily tracked.

"These women are torn," explains the Democratic political consultant Bob Beckel, who managed Walter Mondale's presidential campaign. "They are not comfortable with the Republicans or the Democrats. They have the least social safety net of any group, and enormous responsibility. They are hard to categorize and even harder to find."

Pat Millette has every reason to be anxious. Four and a half years ago she and her husband, Paul, used their savings to buy a small catering business in Providence, Rhode Island—Gallimaufry Good Food. Pat had worked as a construction estimator and painting contractor, Paul as a mechanical engineer. Suddenly they had to write their own paychecks. The mortgage payment on their house was due on the first of the



**Pat Millette: a
small-business owner, anxious
and undecided**



work say that they *must* do so, and do so only to survive. A recent survey commissioned by Harvard University, the Kaiser Family Foundation, and *The Washington Post* found that nearly one third of the citizenry is mired in pessimism and distrustful of the government. Two thirds of the pessimistic respondents were women. It has become almost conventional wisdom that women—anxious or not—will vote Democratic this year. Never mind that historically women have tended to make up their minds about candidates later in a



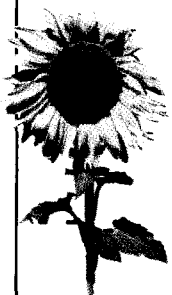
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month, but some of their clients habitually paid late. The price of food kept rising. The paperwork to prove that they were complying with city, state, and federal regulations became a mountain. Then Paul developed a neurological disorder and could no longer carry his share of the burden. Worse, their health insurance was inadequate. By the time they could convince Social Security that Paul truly was disabled, they owed the city, state, and federal governments almost \$25,000 in taxes. All this occurred at a time when the Millettes' business was in fact growing beyond expectations.

Pat Millette is the quintessential Baby Boomer small businesswoman, a member of the fastest-growing sector of women's economic life. Almost eight million of the nation's 22 million small businesses are owned by women, and their number nearly doubled from 1987 to 1992 alone—growing twice as fast as the number of businesses started by men. The growth has been spurred by a variety of factors beyond the usual ambition and quest for self-fulfillment: a widespread sense of economic insecurity, marital breakup that suddenly pushes women into the labor force, the sometimes stultifying atmosphere of corporate America, and the opportunities offered by computers and faxes to work out of one's home. Women like Pat Millette who own small businesses are fed up with taxes, regulations, and government mandates: in a 1994 post-election poll conducted by the Small Business Survival Committee two thirds of them said the federal government was an "opponent" rather than an ally in the pursuit of the American Dream. Even worse for the Democrats is the fact that owners and employees of these businesses vote at almost twice the rate of the population in general, favoring Republicans more than two to one.

A Republican generation gap: abortion finds more support among older women than it does among younger.

Millette does not want to vote Republican. She hasn't lost any of the liberal idealism that made her choose VISTA over the University of Rhode Island after high school, in 1968. She is a fervent supporter of a woman's right to choose an abortion. She voted for Carter and Mondale. As for the Republicans, she says, "there's still a part of me that feels that the Republican Party stands for big business, that it doesn't support the poor and minorities. But I can't afford to be a liberal Democrat anymore. I can't afford to support illegitimate babies, women who have five abortions, and poor people who don't want to work. I can't afford incompetent saints like Carter. Right-wingers scare me, but so do left-wingers. It feels like everything has gotten out of hand." So she suspects that she will cast her ballot for Bob Dole in November, although grudgingly. "I'm not enthusiastic, and it feels weird to be voting for a Republican," she says, "but I just want Bill Clinton out of the White House."

In search of the female vote that earned Bill Clinton the 1992 election, Clinton's campaign managers have instructed government-agency heads to organize "women's events" at which the President might appear. A female-outreach office has been created. The neo-feminist author Naomi Wolf was called in to help campaign advisers design a presidential image that will appeal to women. Her suggestion: depict Clinton as the "good father" protecting the national home from Republican bulldozers.

That would do nothing to win over someone like Millette. She is glad that Clinton supports abortion, but says she won't cast her vote on the basis of that issue. She's not persuaded that affirmative action makes much sense. Although she likes the idea of giving certain groups special support, she has seen too many "woman-owned businesses" in which nonworking wives simply front for their husbands. The only thing that still pushes her toward the Democrats is that she, like most women in the anxious class, is worried that heavy-handed budget cuts will damage the safety net she believes is necessary for the poor and the vulnerable. The Republicans have not persuaded her that they share this concern. The Democrats have persuaded her that they are incapable of maintaining such a safety net rationally.

IN that final sentiment Pat Millette finds common ground with April Lasiter and Judy Jefferson. But not in much more, and that is why it is still unclear whether such women represent fragments coming together into a larger movement. To be sure, it would be easy to dismiss them as individual voices of protest and rebellion—but how unified and homogeneous were the women who marched under the banner of feminism? They were union workers and corporate executives, suburban homemakers and urban maids. Yet they managed to carve out enough of a shared agenda to reshape parts of American politics and thought—at least for a while.

Needless to say, Newt Gingrich is determined to help women come together, and is open about the fact that his party is making a play for their attention. It was no accident, he said when I spoke with him, that Christine Todd Whitman was chosen to give the Republican response to President Clinton's 1995 State of the Union address. It was no accident that Jo Baylor, a black woman and former congressional candidate from Austin, Texas, introduced Gingrich at the unveiling of the Contract With America. Gingrich is pleased that the mayor of San Diego, America's sixth-largest city and the setting for this year's Republican National Convention, is not only a Republican but also a woman, Susan Golding.

With some polls suggesting that the gender gap might widen into a Grand Canyon in November, Bob Dole announced that Representative Susan Molinari, of New York, would give the keynote speech at the convention. And he and other party leaders have vowed to redefine "women's issues" to appeal to female voters by persuading them that a balanced budget, lower taxes, and school choice will do more to improve their lives than will affirmative action, abortion, and funding for rape-crisis centers. "When you start down this road," Gingrich said when we spoke, "you realize that if we effectively communicate the real-world difference between the two parties, we could have a surprising shift in the gender gap in two or three months."

"If we could do as well with women as we do with men," he went on, "we'll be the dominant party for the next generation." ☛

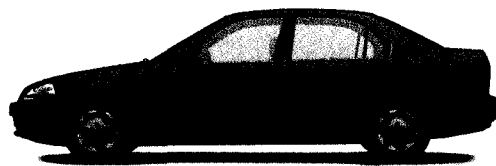
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Vessel of Last Resort

*One of the last tourists to take a barge up
the Congo River had arrived,
but dead of malaria*

JOSEPH Conrad traveled 1,100 miles up the Congo River to find the heart of darkness; I was sure I had seen it at mile one.

I stood on the rusty, urine-stained deck of a

cargo barge watching Kinshasa, the capital of Zaire, recede into a humid gray haze. The city that from Brazzaville had looked so prosperous, with its skyscrapers and dock cranes, turned out up close to be a farrago of squalor and raucous mayhem: troops of beggars limping on pretzeled legs clogged the multilane Boulevard du 30 Juin; fires smoldered in

by Jeffrey Tayler

refuse heaps alive with the ulcerous, emaciated bodies of those too weak to beg; silver Mercedes rocketed through the rub-

ble, scattering crowds, carrying their owners to hush-hush diamond

deals in posh Gombe. And outside the confines of the modern district, in the old Cité and beyond, gangs of youths armed with guns and knives patrolled slums four million strong. Someone must have gone mad here to let all this hap-

pen: if present-day Kinshasa wasn't Kurtz's "Inner Station," I didn't know what was.

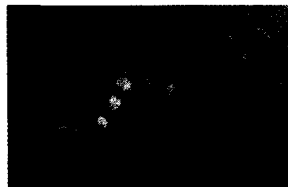
With our barge cabled to its bow, the white-and-blue *pousseur*, or pusher boat, headed out toward mid-river, and we were free of Kinshasa's stench. It was evening; the day's heat was abating. Ahead, toward the Equator, the sky and water dissolved into a mist of luminous azure.

Travel on the Congo, or Zaire, River has never been easy, and with the chaos prevailing in the country since 1990, when Mobutu Sese Seko, Zaire's President-for-life dictator, declared a transitional period to democracy, it has become

more difficult than ever. The army, unpaid, has run amok several times, carrying out huge *pillages*; the economy has collapsed; and ONATRA, the national transporta-

Above, the author's home for three weeks.

Below, nonpaying passenger: a tsetse fly





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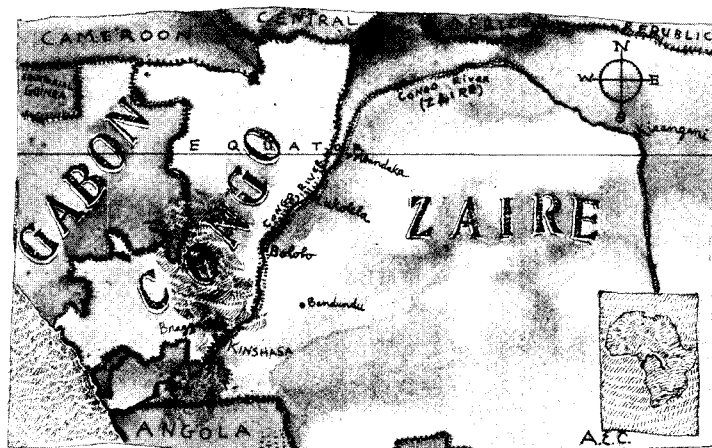
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tion company, has gone bankrupt, only rarely sending upriver its one functioning Congo barge—actually a floating slum of some half a dozen barges lashed to an ailing pusher boat. As a result, merchants have turned to private barges for transport and to conduct trade with the interior, where most of Zaire's 45 million people live, and where roads, if they exist at all, are truck-swallowing quagmires for most of the year. But the barges lack even the skeletal amenities (rat-infested cabins, clogged toilets, starchy food) that the ONATRA boats offered, and travel is brutally basic. For the equivalent of thirty dollars you get a space on a rusty steel deck and no more. That will have to suffice for two to six weeks of floating through some of the steamiest terrain on earth. Zairians wondered what misfortune could have driven me to take the barge, and every ex-

patriate I met in Kinshasa said that such crafts were not for non-Zairians. "When cholera breaks out on board," an American missionary warned me, "people just die and they throw the bodies overboard." A British expat said that the last tourist to take a barge to Kisangani had arrived, but dead of malaria.

I was no old Africa hand when I arrived in Zaire, no seasoned veteran of tropical travel. In fact, I had spent the three previous years in Russia, and a desire to escape the cold and break out of the gray-bureaucracy syndrome I suffered from there had a lot to do with my thoughts' running Equatorward at every idle moment that winter. When, in February, I came upon the British explorer Henry Morton Stanley's account of his voyage down the Congo, I was mesmerized. The desire seized me, *possessed* me, to quit the northland and travel this greatest of all sub-Saharan Africa's rivers, no matter what the risks or discomforts. I was not a missionary or a naturalist, nor was I a vacationer expecting the civilized pleasures of an all-inclusive Kenyan game-park safari; rather, I was a northerner gripped by a monomania for the primal truth of the Congo, and the only cure would be a crucible on its muddy waters.

THE deck was empty save for a few crew members and a pimply pastor from Lukolela engrossed in a Jimmy Swaggart tract. But our solitude was not to last: we were drawing toward the port at Selza, a suburb of Kinshasa, where a crowd was scrimmaging on the pier. Even before we docked, people started casting aboard foam mattresses and baskets and bales of cloth, leaping over the watery divide onto our deck. Gendarmes thrashed at the crowd with rope whips, but in vain:



by the time we moored, every square inch was occupied. Tinny Zairian pop blared forth from the barge's loudspeakers. The floating river fête had begun.

The owner, Nguma, had taken pity on me and assigned me a crew member's cabin; but with a loudspeaker over the door and no windows, it turned out to be a noisy oven. I gathered up my mosquito net and sheets and billeted myself in solitude above the bridge on the *pousseur*. Feeling nauseated with shock from the crowds, the heat, and the excitement of the trip, I lay down on my foam mattress and peered through the gauze at the stars, thinking back on the history of this enormous river, the second longest in Africa. Stanley had fought his way down it from Nyangwe in 1876 and 1877, losing many of the members of his expedition to disease, to drowning, and to battles with the tribes that live on the middle and upper banks even today. My trip, tame as it was by comparison, still seemed an impossible feat: this cramped floating crate of steel had to chug up 1,100 miles of jungle river. If I got sick, if *anyone* got sick, if we broke down, there was nothing to be done about it but hope that Providence, so clearly unmoved by the tableau of mass suffering in Zaire, might decide to

make a gesture of divine benevolence toward us. Many merchants, I was to learn, had had friends die on the river, from cholera or malaria or other, nameless fevers—a fate I hoped to avoid with half a dozen vaccines and a satchel stuffed full of Nivaquine and Paludrine pills, the malaria prophylaxes commonly prescribed in Zaire. The commencement of every voyage up the Congo was thus attended by fervent prayers for Godspeed, by whispered supplications to fetishes, by wailing farewells from relatives on shore. Our voyage was no exception. No one was certain who would arrive alive in Kisangani.

Dawn found us coursing past grassy flatland marked here and there by trees whose majestic canopies spread like giant green mushroom caps. I climbed down the ladder from the upper deck.

"Would you like to bathe?" asked Jean, the lean, neat, green-eyed chief accountant. "My room has the only bath on the barge."

He led me around the *pousseur* and through his quarters to the "bathroom"—a slimy metallic cubicle with a hole in the floor—and handed me a bucket filled with unctuous green water, bath-warm with a frothy head, drawn as it was straight from the Congo's hot currents. As I scrubbed and rinsed with it, I had the sensation that it was an organic fluid. It felt viscous, sebaceous; I seemed to be bathing in plasma. It stung my eyes, and I wondered how river blindness was transmitted (not like this, it turns out).

Everywhere on deck straw mats lay strewn with bolts of cloth, sacks of sugar and salt, malaria pills in white boxes, batteries, needles and thread and scissors, cookie tins, Bic pens, school notebooks with green covers. The merchants—who were the majority of the barge's passengers—laughed and bantered among themselves in Lingala, the language most widely spoken along the river, interrupting their discourse to shout, "*Ey, mondele* ['white man']! *Bonjour!*" as I walked by. Mothers scrubbed down two-year-olds, skillet sizzled with onions and chunks of fish in palm oil, thump-thump-thumps re-

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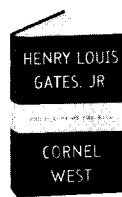
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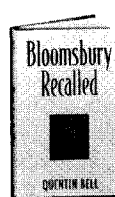
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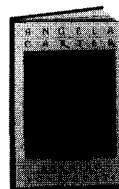
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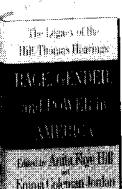
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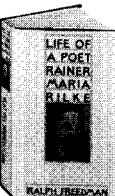
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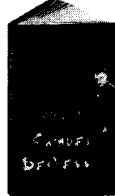
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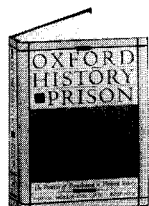
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NEWBRIDGE

sounded as women in rainbow robes pounded plantains into mash with carved mallets. A congregation led by the pastor from Lukolela chanted Lingala spirituals at the stern.

I chatted, in French, as I walked around. Among the merchants there were high hopes for the income this voyage might bring, as well as fear. A twenty-five-year-old man originally from Bandundu said to me, "I was a tailor in Kin, but when the *pillages* began, in 1991, I

master at getting by—or doesn't last.

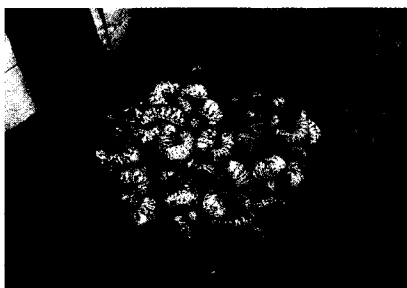
Day three found us amid whitecapped waters and buffeting winds. We chugged ahead into rushing rafts of water hyacinth, through the part of the river known as le Chenal, a narrow strait paralleled by low mountains. The sky was lowering and iron-gray, with lightning flickering from the Equator ahead. No pirogues came out to meet us; villages were few. But the first signs of a great jungle were appearing: on ridges stood



lost my business, so I took to the barges. I have a fiancée—she'll leave me if I can't buy her dresses and jewelry. So here I am, risking this voyage. People get diarrhea and dysentery on these trips, and sometimes the boats sink. Man proposes, but God disposes."

Those who have taken to the barges confront head-on the timeless, primal phenomena of sun, rain, wind, and heat, and engage in a pattern of trade millennia old. All day they sell their basically urban merchandise to villagers paddling up in dugout canoes, immediately using their profits to buy the manioc root, smoked fish, monkey, crocodile, and antelope offered by these same villagers. The merchants then hawk these foodstuffs in the huge markets of Kisangani after the ascent of the river or Kinshasa after the descent. Even crew members stockpile smoked fish or monkey for their families at home. Everyone aboard becomes a *débrouillard*—a

Above, merchants on deck. Right, fried grubs and smoked catfish



massive, broad-boughed trees, and the savanna's underbrush gathered into higher and denser clumps.

The next day began with a flurry of shouts in rainy fog. Loaded with pineapples and manioc tubers, pirogues in V-shaped formations of three and four were

shooting toward us through the mizzle and docking at our sides. I stood at the railing composing shots on my Nikon.

"*Nina! Nina!*" someone shouted. "*Nina!*" An excited murmur arose on deck. A man with "*Nina*" on his lips forced his way through the crowd and hurled himself overboard, just missing a pirogue. Thirty feet from the barge floated a fish the size of an inner tube, dead and belly-up in the choppy gray waters.

"An electric catfish, a *nina*!" a boy next to me shouted. "What a prize! It will bring him ten dollars." But the man missed it, it floated past, and then the drama for those on deck became whether he could catch up with the barge again. He thrashed the water in a sloppy crawl, landing near the *pousseur* at the stern, and hoisted himself aboard. A hero for the entertainment he had provided, he raised his arms to general applause.

THE heat in the Kinshasa region had been bearable, but my travel mates warned me that after Bolobo, which we had just passed, the climate would turn equatorial. The next dawn dragonflies and fat, sluggish moths covered my mosquito net. The river had become a sheet of glass spreading to infinity around us, overhung by a suffocating mist; the air had turned heavy, gone sour with tropical rot. No banks were visible, although the occasional island—a ragged outcropping of black tree silhouettes—drifted by in the steam. Noon brought white heat and steely white light; the Congo became a lifeless, utterly still lake of glare, ten miles wide, all colors reduced to black and gray against the white of water and sky. The barge's surfaces became untouchably hot, and shade diminished as the incandescent ball of the sun rose directly overhead. The merchants erected tarps up and down the deck and lay prostrate under them, torpid with the heat.

Dusk came. We were a spearhead slicing into an azure river-and-sky melange, seemingly released from the bounds of earth, floating in a blue domain. Astern, to the west, the river was bankless, tintured lilac, bleeding red, running into cool purple with the sun's descent.

Recovered from the day's heat, I sat under the light behind the owner's cabin trying to read V. S. Naipaul, a futile endeavor given the moths and cicadas

swirling around me. Then something golf-ball-sized slammed into my temple. I looked down and saw a huge armored beetle writhing at my feet. Djili, the freight manager, came over and picked it up. "We eat these beetles, you know. Come over and answer a few questions." He led me to a circle of palm-wine drinkers at the bow. Marijuana, called *bangi* in Lingala, was being smoked on the deck, and its pungently sweet aroma perfumed the air. The drinkers were chasing their wine with fat white fried palm grubs that they selected from a bowl at their feet.

"Your country is supposed to stand for human rights, but what about the rights of a man?" Djili asked, biting off the head of a grub and chewing it lustily a few inches from my face. "Have a grub. I hear that your government would forbid me to have more than one wife. I should be able to have as many wives as I choose—that's my right as a man. But your government would forbid it. *C'est pas juste.*"

Fearfully tasting my grub, and finding it chewy and squirting hot palm oil, I muttered something about polygamy being un-Christian, but this only provoked a tirade. *I am eating a larva*, I said to myself.

"Un-Christian? Polygamy goes back to Jesus' day! It's your government that's un-Christian, allowing pornography in the streets and forbidding me my basic rights as a man! Here, try a caterpillar." Djili held out a bowl of the brown squirming things. Still inwardly reeling from the grub, I had to refuse, but a little girl, looking at me wide-eyed, took one of the living creatures and chomped it to pieces, swallowing it with a gulp. We talked, or I should say Djili raved, until night fell and the mosquitoes drove me off the bow.

THE ninth day found us hugging the bank close to the great jungle, a tangled mass of green lucent in its nearest reaches with sunlight pouring in from above, but dark and gloomy farther in. Occasionally a monkey would scream and bound branch to branch back into the trees, or red-and-gray parrots would squawk and take flight. Huge, gangly birds that the locals call *kulokoko* screeched at the sight of us, like pterodactyls horrified to discover men trespassing in their prehistoric domain, and

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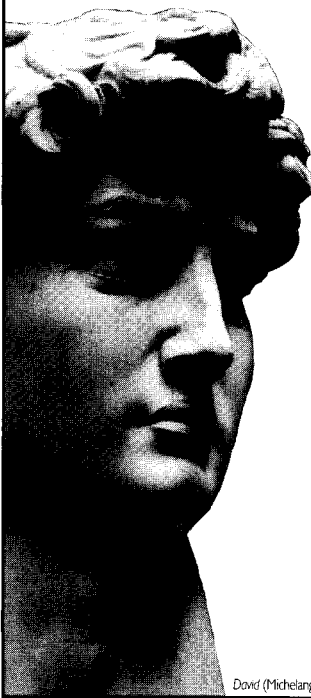
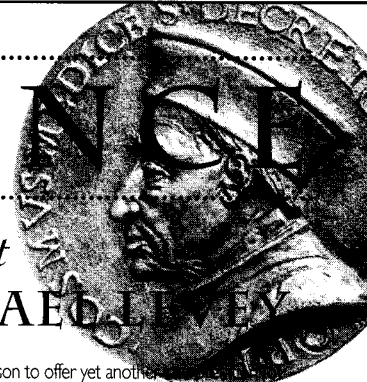
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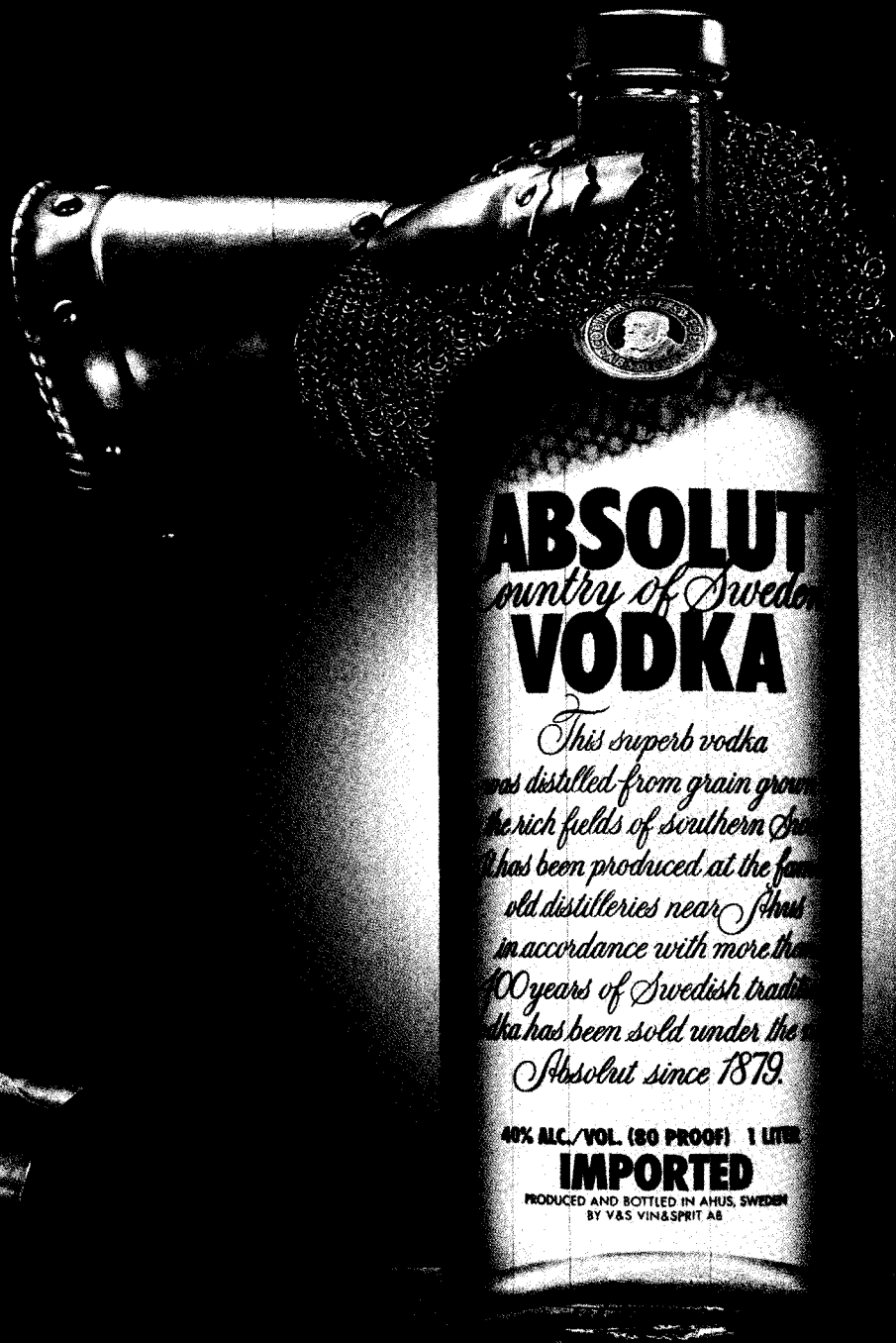
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THOSE WHO APPRECIATE QUALITY ENJOY IT RESPONSIBLY

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wuff-wuffed away in heavy-winged flight. Once, I caught sight of a cobra, some fifteen feet long and black, swimming along the hyacinth, its emblematic curved head and neck slicing the coffee-brown water. We were deep in the midst of an Africa many would have thought vanished centuries ago, an Africa as eternal as the dugout canoes and the blood-red sunsets.

One day a villager paddled up with a five-foot-long live crocodile, its jaws roped shut, in the bottom of his pirogue; it was bought by Maurice, a merchant from Kinshasa. "I'll smoke this and sell it," he said. "It'll pay for my return ticket." He and the villager struggled to get the thrashing black reptile out of the pirogue without receiving a blow from its tail or dropping it into the water; several bystanders helped, but the croc still whacked one boy in the face with its tail. When they had dragged it away from the edge of the deck, Maurice took to pounding in its skull with the handle of a machete until it ceased struggling, its emerald eyes slit with black and staring fiercely, even in death.

At night the specters of great trees loomed black against the Milky Way's lustrous wash of stardust. With our spotlight probing the waters in front of us, searching for shoals, illuminating swirling beetles and crow-sized bats, with mosquitoes showing like a fine mist in their millions, we threaded our way through a dark labyrinth of isles. Drumbeats announcing our arrival resounded from villages ahead; 700 miles into the jungle we were still beset by pirogues, many carrying stacks of monkey carcasses, blackened, their eyes and mouths wide open as if they had been smoked alive in stark terror. Some paddlers were bare-breasted women, others men in loincloths. Once we ran over a pirogue, occasioning loss of property but not of life: its occupants jumped free in time. All night there were shouts, drumbeats, armadas of canoes laden with bush meat streaming toward us.

Late the next evening I was watching a dispute between the barge's security chief, Augustin, and a couple of drunken fishermen when the barge lurched. I grabbed the rail; others fell flailing into their merchandise. The engine sputtered, and crew members raced toward the *pousseur*, jumping over cooking pots and sacks of salt. The engine roared, coughed. Behind the propellers the spotlight

showed fulminating clouds of sand in the water. We had run aground so violently that one of our two rudders had been severed and an engine incapacitated.

I WAS exhausted. Almost three weeks of heat and crowd and hassle on the barge seemed to have drained the life out of me. Nze, the chief mechanic, said that this was a serious accident that could delay us by three days at least. We were already a week late. I wanted to



A village welcomes the barge

scream. To the south, over the forest, lightning flared silently at first, and then with rumbles of thunder. We sat still, with the Congo's warm fluids rushing past our motionless bow in a rippling V.

In despair I retired to my spot above the bridge. A full moon hung over the silhouettes of trees on the distant bank and dappled the waters below with its orange glow. Nevertheless rain came that night, soft and slight in the beginning, and then hot, copious, and pummeling. I gathered up my net and retreated to the awning under the bridge. Until dawn I watched the lightning flare up and show the vast river around us. I shuddered at the crash of thunderbolts that seemed aimed at our craft on the open water.

After a long repair session on a sandbar the next morning, during which the mechanics detached the broken rudder and then placed the good rudder next to the engine that worked, we started up again and moved on toward the black-clouded horizon, past five-story-tall

broad-canopied trees guarding the entrance to the jungle like jealous sentinels.

At noon we began drawing near a stretch of sandy shore. Villagers, mainly young men in rags, came whooping and hollering out of their huts. They leaped into their pirogues and paddled furiously toward us. Augustin whistled in alarm. The owner emerged onto the bridge platform bearing an automatic rifle. The villagers let loose what sounded like a war cry, and Augustin yelled to them not to dock, but some tried anyway. At this the owner brandished his rifle and began firing shots into the air, and the villagers abandoned the barge, with one pirogue capsizing in our violent, single-engine wake.

"It is dangerous here," the owner said. "These people are cannibals. They will see you and say, 'Ah, the flesh of the *mondele* is like sugar!' " He laughed uproariously. "This is a dangerous area for robbers and murderers. The deep jungle is wild in people as well as beasts."

A boy on the bank made a motion with his arms as if machine-gunning me, and soon all his little pals imitated him. Desi, a merchant from Lokutu, turned to me. "You see, they fear you, the *mondele*," he said. "White people to them are murderers, villains. The children hear how the Belgians used to eat little boys and girls, and they think you, any white, is a Belgian. For them to kill you would be an act of self-defense."

Eleven hundred miles and twenty-one days after leaving Kinshasa we pulled into Kisangani, in the very heart of equatorial Africa. The merchants, though they complained that business had been bad on this run and that they would barely break even, laughed and shouted jokes to one another as they struggled to haul their smoked fish and bush meat to the huge market. Here Conrad's Marlow alighted to find a spiritually diseased and languishing Kurtz, but here I was to disembark into mainstream modern African life, with no ceremony, no commentary ready to deliver on the malaise of twentieth-century humanity's soul. Dazed with fatigue, disoriented, I followed the merchants off the barge and began making my way up toward the dusty main street, with its placarded hotels and diamond traders, with the bells of the city's broad white cathedral chiming over the din of the crowds. ☾



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Help so he can check out the day's beach
conditions, just by surfing the Net.

Help so he doesn't have to mess with a bunch of
different phone bills at the end of the month.

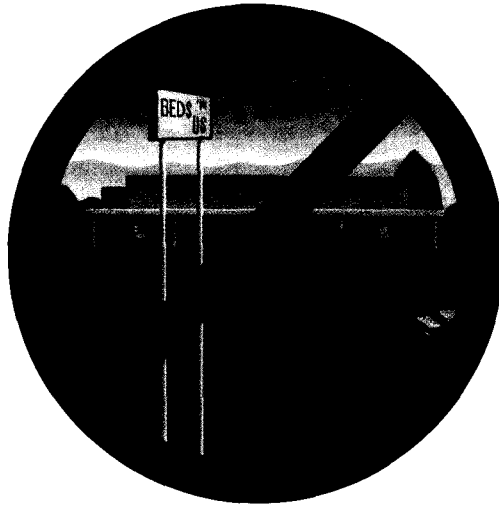
Help so he can call his brother the exchange
student and harass him about the waves in London.



IT'S AMAZING WHAT
WE CAN DO TOGETHER.

Home From Nowhere

by JAMES HOWARD KUNTSLER



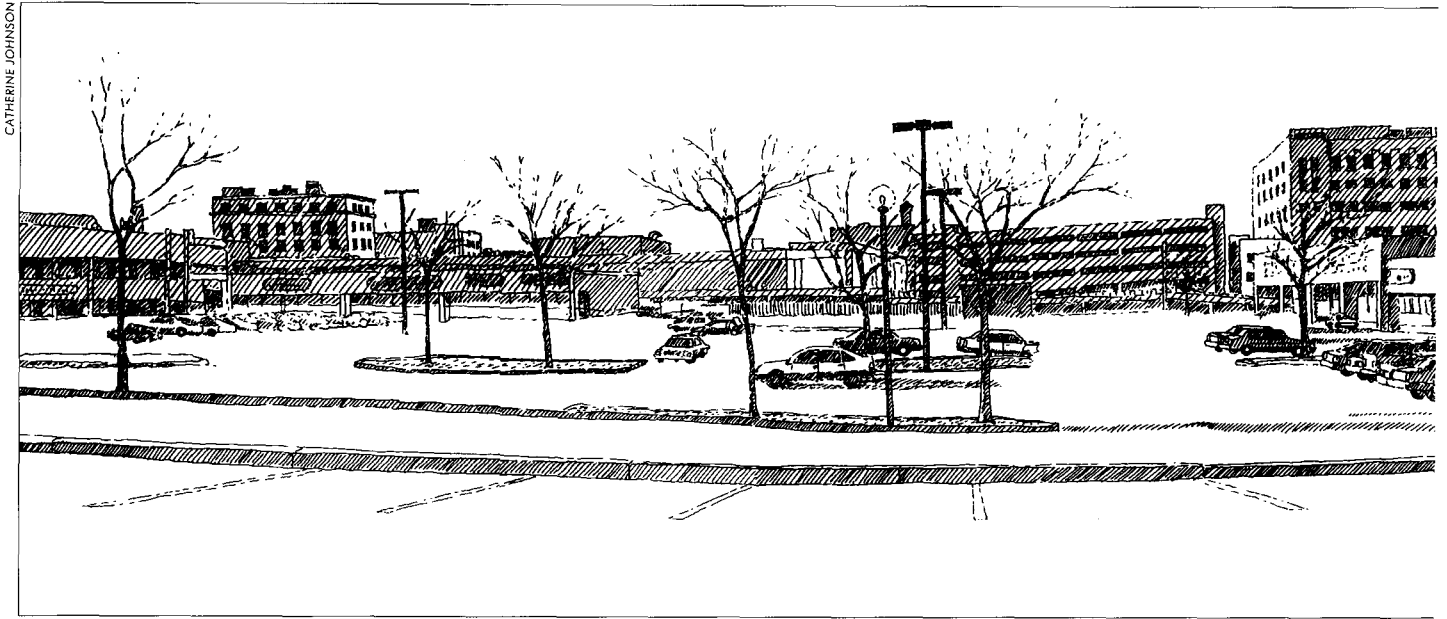
Can the momentum of sprawl be halted? America's zoning laws, intended to control the baneful effects of industry, have mutated, in the view of one architecture critic, into a system that corrodes civic life, outlaws the human scale, defeats tradition and authenticity, and confounds our yearning for an everyday environment worthy of our affection

A MERICANS sense that something is wrong with the places where we live and work and go about our daily business. We hear this unhappiness expressed in phrases like "no sense of place" and "the loss of community." We drive up and down the gruesome, tragic suburban boulevards of commerce, and we're overwhelmed at the fantastic, awesome, stupefying ugliness of absolutely everything in sight—the fry pits, the big-box stores, the office units, the lube joints, the carpet warehouses, the parking lagoons, the jive plastic townhouse clusters, the uproar of signs, the highway itself clogged with cars—as though the whole thing had been designed by some diabolical force bent on making human beings miserable. And naturally, this experience can make us feel glum about the nature and future of our civilization.

When we drive around and look at all this cartoon architecture and other junk that we've smeared all over the land-

scape, we register it as ugliness. This ugliness is the surface expression of deeper problems—problems that relate to the issue of our national character. The highway strip is not just a sequence of eyesores. The pattern it represents is also economically catastrophic, an environmental calamity, socially devastating, and spiritually degrading.

It is no small irony that during the period of America's greatest prosperity, in the decades following the Second World War, we put up almost nothing but the cheapest possible buildings, particularly civic buildings. Compare any richly embellished firehouse or post office built in 1904 with its dreary concrete-box counterpart today. Compare the home of a small-town bank president of the 1890s, with its massive masonry walls and complex roof articulation, with the flimsy home of a 1990s business leader, made of two-by-fours, Sheetrock, and fake fanlight windows. When we were a far less wealthy nation, we built things with the expectation that



CATHERINE JOHNSON

they would endure. To throw away money (painfully acquired) and effort (painfully expended) on something certain to fall apart in thirty years would have seemed immoral, if not insane, in our great-grandparents' day.

The buildings our predecessors constructed paid homage to history in their design, including elegant solutions to age-old problems posed by the cycles of weather and light, and they paid respect to the future in the sheer expectation that they would endure through the lifetimes of the people who built them. They therefore embodied a sense of chronological connectivity, one of the fundamental patterns of the universe: an understanding that time is a defining dimension of existence—particularly the existence of living things, such as human beings, who miraculously pass into life and then inevitably pass out of it.

Chronological connectivity lends meaning and dignity to our little lives. It charges the present with a vivid validation of our own aliveness. It puts us in touch with the ages and with the eternities, suggesting that we are part of a larger and more significant organism. It even suggests that the larger organism we are part of *cares* about us, and that, in turn, we should respect ourselves and our fellow creatures and all those who will follow us in time, as those preceding us respected those who followed them. In short, chronological connectivity puts us in touch with the holy. It is at once humbling and exhilarating. I say this as someone who has never followed any formal religious practice. Connection with the past and the future is a pathway that charms us in the direction of sanity and grace.

The antithesis to this can be seen in the way we have built things since 1945. We reject the past and the future, and this repudiation is manifest in our graceless constructions. Our residential, commercial, and civic buildings are constructed with the fully conscious expectation that they will disinte-

grate in a few decades. This condition even has a name: "design life." Strip malls and elementary schools have short design lives. They are expected to fall apart in less than fifty years. Since these things are not expected to speak to any era but our own, we seem unwilling to put money or effort into their embellishment. Nor do we care about traditional solutions to the problems of weather and light, because we have technology to mitigate these problems—namely, central heating and electricity. Thus in many new office buildings the windows don't open. In especially bad buildings, like the average Wal-Mart, windows are dispensed with nearly altogether. This process of disconnection from the past and the future, and from the organic patterns of weather and light, done for the sake of expedience, ends up diminishing us spiritually, impoverishing us socially, and degrading the aggregate set of cultural patterns that we call civilization.

Destroying the Grand Union Hotel

THE everyday environments of our time, the places where we live and work, are composed of dead patterns. These environments infect the patterns around them with disease and ultimately with contagious deadness, and deaden us in the process. The patterns that emerge fail to draw us in, fail to invite us to participate in the connectivity of the world. They frustrate our innate biological and psychological needs—for instance, our phototropic inclination to seek natural daylight, our need to feel protected, our need to keep a destination in sight as we move about town. They violate human scale. They are devoid of charm.

Our streets used to be charming and beautiful. The public realm of the street was understood to function as an outdoor room. Like any room, it required walls to define the essential



The one-story buildings of a strip mall, remote behind their vast parking lots, do a poor job of defining public space

void of the room itself. Where I live, Saratoga Springs, New York, a magnificent building called the Grand Union Hotel once existed. Said to have been the largest hotel in the world in the late nineteenth century, it occupied a six-acre site in the heart of town. The hotel consisted of a set of narrow buildings that lined the outside of an unusually large superblock. Inside the block was a semi-public parklike courtyard. The street sides of the hotel incorporated a gigantic verandah twenty feet deep, with a roof that was three stories high and supported by columns. This façade functioned as a marvelous street wall, active and permeable. The hotel's size (a central cupola reached seven stories) was appropriate to the scale of the town's main street, called Broadway. For much of the year the verandah was filled with people sitting perhaps eight feet above the sidewalk grade, talking to one another while they watched the pageant of life on the street. These verandah-sitters were protected from the weather by the roof, and protected from the sun by elm trees along the sidewalk. The orderly rows of elms performed an additional architectural function. The trunks were straight and round, like columns, reiterating and reinforcing the pattern of the hotel façade, while the crowns formed a vaulted canopy over the sidewalk, pleasantly filtering the sunlight for pedestrians

as well as hotel patrons. All these patterns worked to enhance the lives of everybody in town—a common laborer on his way home as well as a railroad millionaire rocking on the verandah. In doing so, they supported civic life as a general proposition. They nourished our civilization.

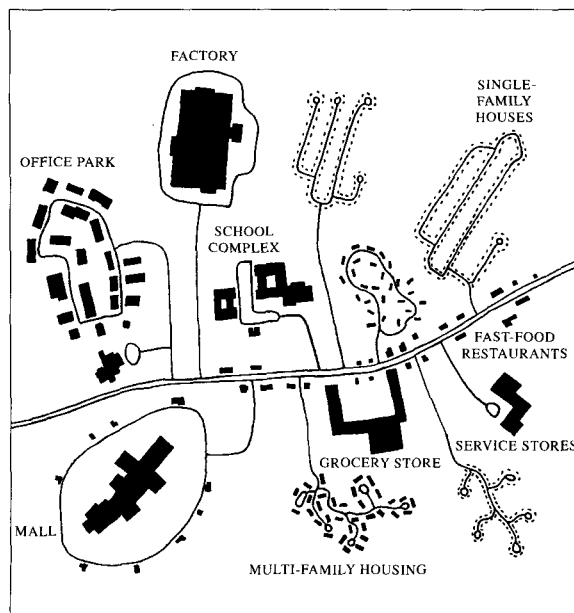
When I say that the façade of the Grand Union Hotel was permeable, I mean that the building contained activities that attracted people inside, and had a number of suitably embellished entrances that allowed people to pass in and out of the building gracefully and enjoyably. Underneath the verandah, half a story below the sidewalk grade, a number of shops operated, selling cigars, newspapers, clothing, and other goods. Thus the street wall was permeable at more than one level and had a multiplicity of uses.

The courtyard park that occupied the inside of the six-acre block had winding gravel paths lined with benches among more towering elm trees. It was a tranquil place of repose—though sometimes band concerts and balls were held there. Any reasonably attired person could walk in off the street, pass through the hotel lobby, and enjoy the interior park. This courtyard had even-more-overt characteristics of a big outdoor room than the street did. It was much more enclosed. Like the street façade, the courtyard façade featured a broad, permeable verandah with a high roof. The verandah functioned as a mediating zone between the outdoor world and the world of the hotel's interior, with its many public, semi-public, and private rooms. One passed from public to private in a logical sequence, and the transition was eased at each stage by conscious embellishment. The order of things was, by nature, more formal than what we are accustomed to in our sloppy, clownish, informal age. The layers of intersecting patterns at work in

this place were extraordinarily rich. The patterns had a quality of great aliveness, meaning they worked wonderfully as an ensemble, each pattern doing its job while it supported and reinforced the other patterns. The hotel was therefore a place of spectacular charm. It was demolished in 1953.

Although nothing lasts forever, it was tragic that this magnificent building was destroyed less than a hundred years after it was completed. In 1953 America stood at the brink of the greatest building spree in world history, and the very qualities that had made the Grand Union Hotel so wonderful were antithetical to all

SEPARATION CAUSED BY ZONING CODES



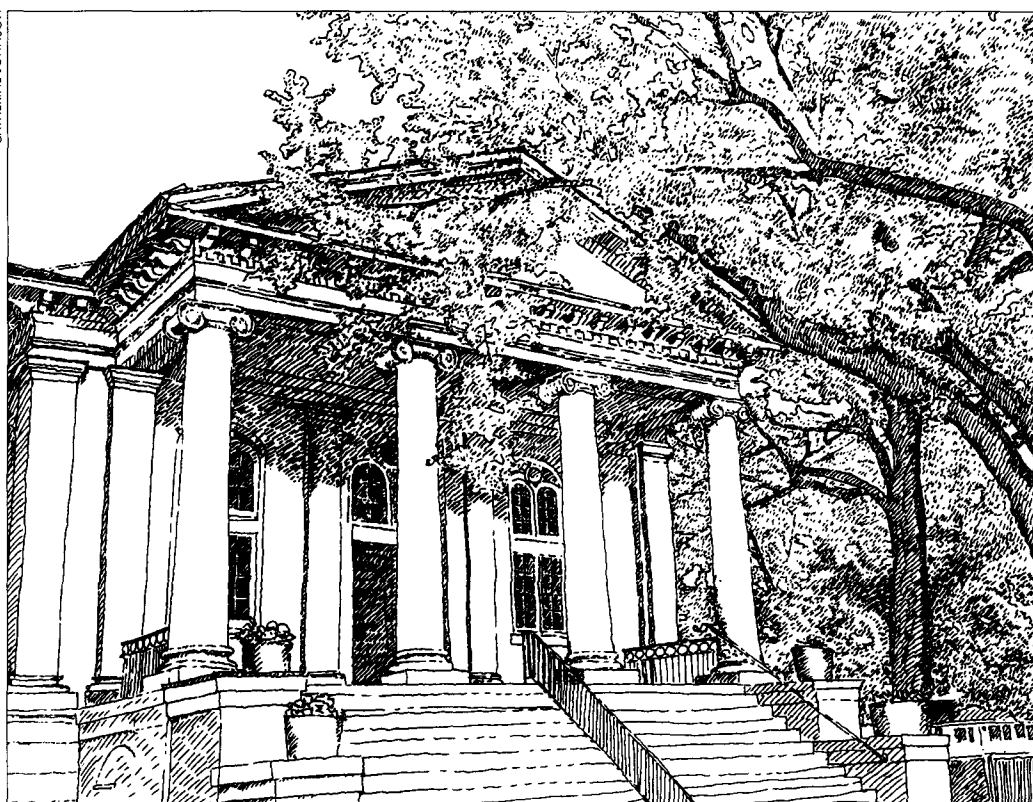
the new stuff that America was about to build. The town demolished it with a kind of mad glee. What replaced the hotel was a strip mall anchored by, of all things, a Grand Union supermarket. This shopping plaza was prototypical for its time. Tens of thousands of strip malls like it have been built all over America since then. It is in every one of its details a perfect piece of junk. It is the anti-place.

What had been the heart and soul of the town was now converted into a kind of mini-Outer Mongolia. The strip-mall buildings were set back from Broadway 150 feet, and a parking lot filled the gap. The street and the buildings commenced a nonrelationship. Since the new buildings were one story high, their scale bore no relation to the scale of the town's most important street. They failed to create a street wall. The perception that the street functioned as an outdoor

simply throw away the past. The owners of the supermarket that anchored the mall didn't live in town. They didn't care what effect their design considerations had on the town. They certainly didn't care about the town's past, and their interest in the town's future had largely to do with technicalities of selling dog food and soap flakes.

What has happened to the interrelation of healthy, living patterns of human ecology in the town where I live has happened all over the country. Almost everywhere the larger patterns are in such a sorry state that the details seem irrelevant. When Saratoga Springs invested tens of thousands of dollars in Victorian-style streetlamps in an effort to create instant charm, the gesture seemed pathetic, because the larger design failures were ignored. It is hard to overstate how ridiculous these lampposts look in the context of our deso-

CATHERINE JOHNSON



Public buildings deserve architectural embellishment in order to express the dignity of the institutions they house and to honor the public realm of the street. They also deserve important sites

room was lost. The space between the buildings and the street now had one function: automobile storage. The street, and consequently the public realm in general, was degraded by the design of the mall. As the street's importance as a public place declined, townspeople ceased to care what happened in it. If it became jammed with cars, so much the better, because individual cars were now understood to be not merely personal transportation but personal home-delivery vehicles, enabling customers to haul away enormous volumes of merchandise very efficiently, at no cost to the merchandiser—which was a great boon for business. That is why the citizens of Saratoga Springs in 1953 were willing to sacrifice the town's most magnificent building. We could

late streets and the cheap, inappropriate new buildings amid their parking lots in what remains of our downtown. The lamppost scheme was like putting Band-Aids on someone who had tripped and fallen on his chainsaw.

The one-story-high Grand Union strip-mall building must be understood as a pattern in itself, a dead one, which infects surrounding town tissue with its deadness. Putting up one-story commercial buildings eliminated a large number of live bodies downtown, and undermined the vitality of the town. One-story mall buildings became ubiquitous across the United States after the war, a predictable byproduct of the zoning zeitgeist that deemed shopping and apartment living to be unsuitable neighbors.

Behind every great book is a great story.



Saturday Sept. 14

- 6 pm/et Alice in Wonderland
- 7 pm/et Huckleberry Finn
- 8 pm/et The Scarlet Letter
- 9 pm/et Moby Dick
- 10 pm/et The Prince
- 11 pm/et The Odyssey
- 12 am/et The Republic

Sunday Sept. 15

- 6 pm/et The War of the Worlds
- 7 pm/et Gulliver's Travels
- 8 pm/et The Art of War
- 9 pm/et Catch-22
- 10 pm/et Interpretation of Dreams
- 11 pm/et Frankenstein
- 12 am/et Native Son

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What's Wrong With This Picture?

The town below seems like a pleasant place to live. What follows are regulatory obstacles that the building of such a town today might encounter—a composite from communities across the country.

The Violations:

1. Stores too convenient for local residents. Newly erected commercial buildings must often be in a zone separate from resi-

dential areas, and thus accessible to most people only by car.

2. Arboreal interference. Traffic departments in many cases deem curbside trees hazardous to motorists.

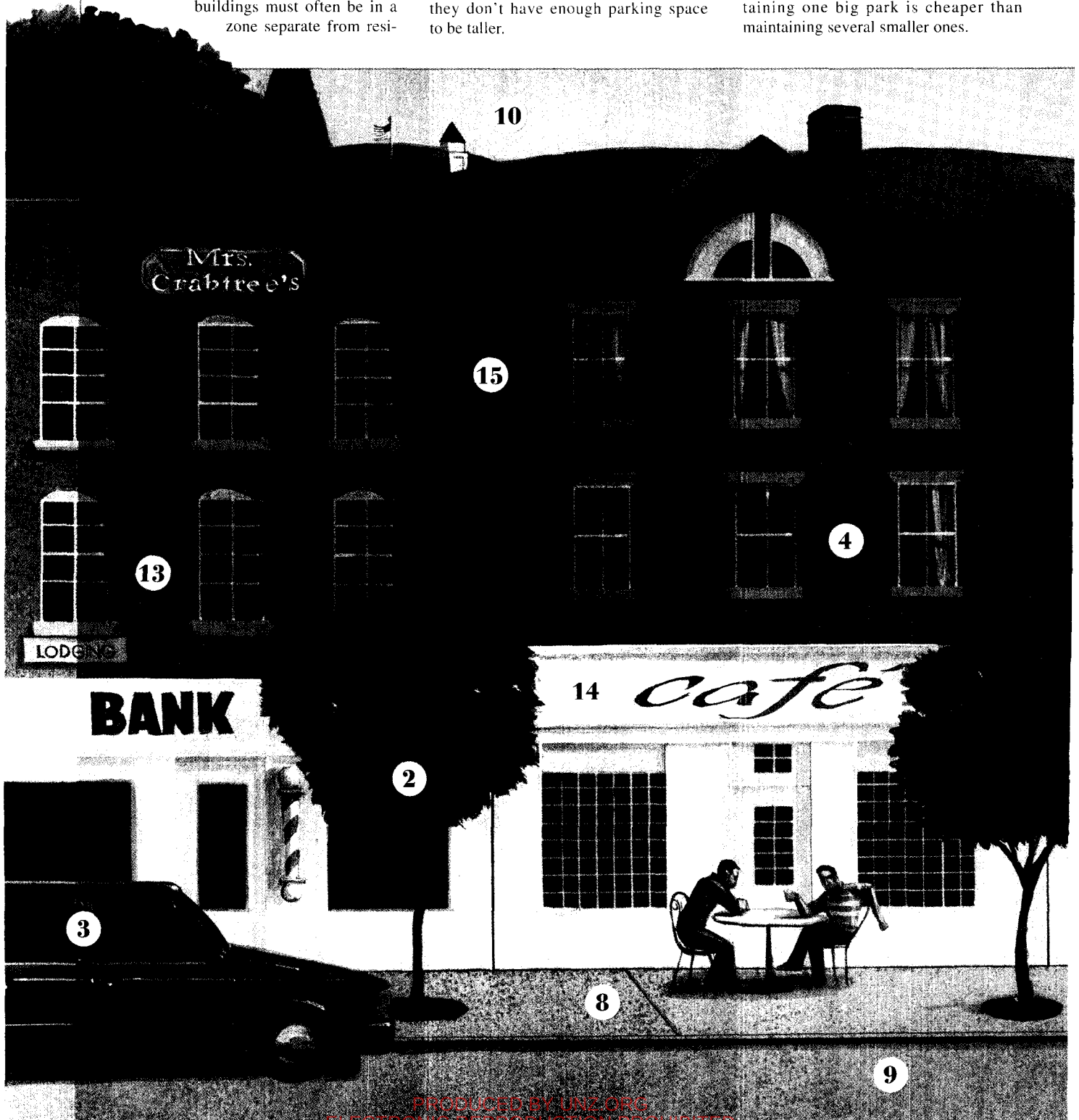
3. No parallel parking allowed. The preference has shifted to off-street lots and driveways.

4. Not enough parking. Typically, three to five parking spaces are required per 1,000 square feet of commercial space. Many commercial buildings today may not be more than one story high because they don't have enough parking space to be taller.

5. Houses too close together. These structures violate minimum side-setback requirements. In many residential areas there must be at least twenty feet between dwellings, eliminating the possibility of row houses.

6. House too small. Many newer communities have minimum-square-footage requirements, which effectively dictate that only people of a certain income level may live there.

7. Park too small. New parks must frequently meet a minimum-size test; maintaining one big park is cheaper than maintaining several smaller ones.



8. Sidewalk café not allowed. Restaurateurs and other vendors may be subject to a variety of sidewalk restrictions.

9. Street too narrow. It must be considered wide enough for large fire trucks to maneuver.

10. School too close to town. Segregated-land-use practices may confine education, religion, and business to distinct zones.

11. Apartments above commercial space. They violate common "single-use" provisions.

12. Sidewalk too narrow. Five feet is a typical requirement.

13. Group housing. In some places there are sharp limits on the number of unrelated people who may live together in a single dwelling unit.

14. Aesthetic deviance. Communities often have regulations governing the size of signs and sometimes even the size and style of the lettering.

15. Too many buildings. In certain zones less than half and sometimes as little as one fifth of the area may be occupied by structures.

16. Cupolas and steeples not allowed. These are frequently ruled out by maximum-height stipulations.

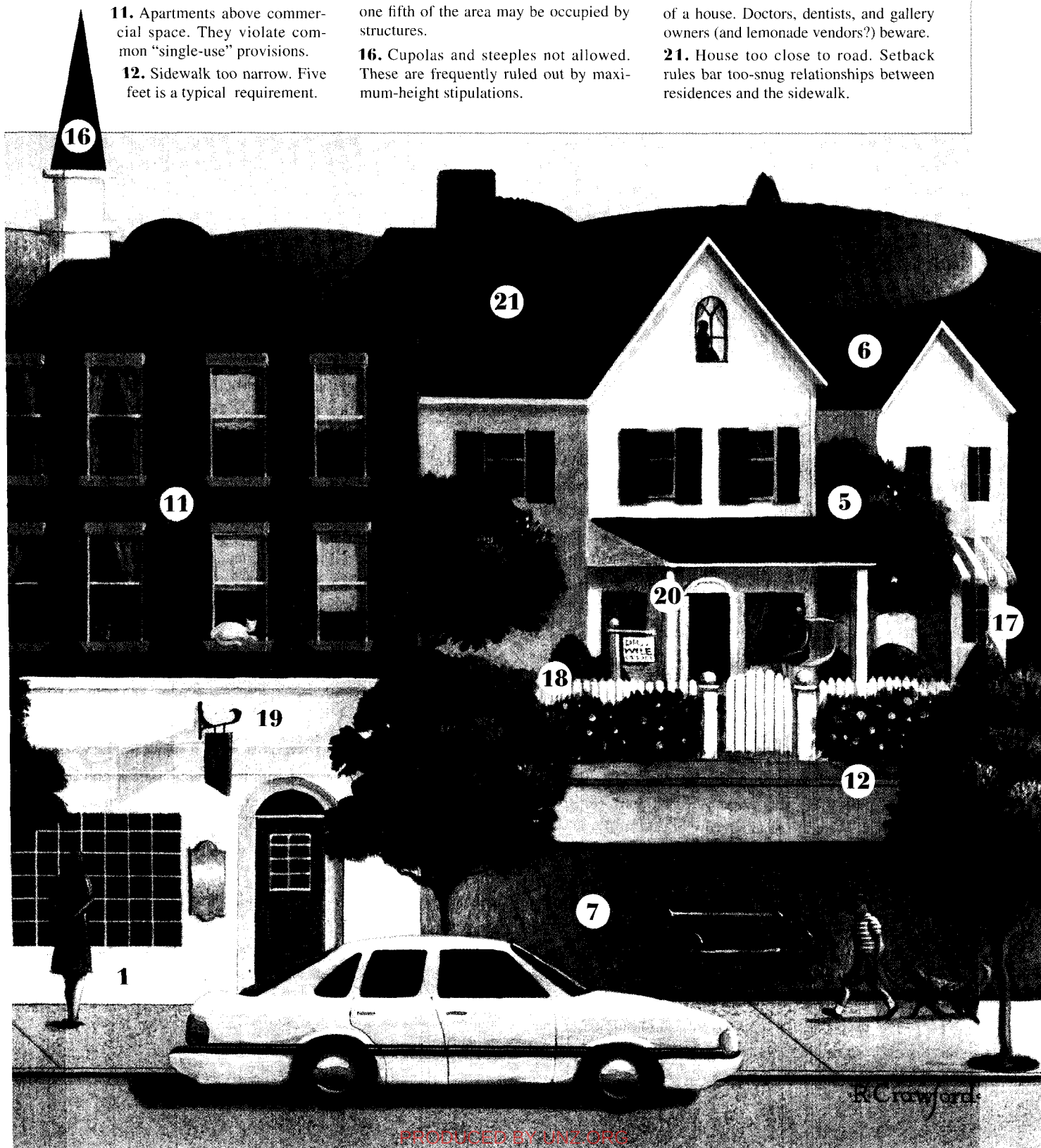
17. No driveway. Individual dwellings may be required to have at least two off-street parking spaces.

18. Illegal fence. Ordinances often cover the permissible size and placement of fences in front yards.

19. No perpendicular signs allowed. Such signs are commonly deemed an intrusion or a menace.

20. Not allowed to run a business out of a house. Doctors, dentists, and gallery owners (and lemonade vendors?) beware.

21. House too close to road. Setback rules bar too-snug relationships between residences and the sidewalk.



Creating Someplace

ALMOST everywhere in the United States laws prohibit building the kinds of places that Americans themselves consider authentic and traditional. Laws prevent the building of places that human beings can feel good in and can afford to live in. Laws forbid us to build places that are worth caring about.

Is Main Street your idea of a nice business district? Sorry, your zoning laws won't let you build it, or even extend it where it already exists. Is Elm Street your idea of a nice place to live—you know, houses with front porches on a tree-lined street? Sorry, Elm Street cannot be assembled under the rules of large-lot zoning and modern traffic engineering. All you can build where I live is another version of Los Angeles—the zoning laws say so.

This is not a gag. Our zoning laws are essentially a manual of instructions for creating the stuff of our communities. Most of these laws have been in place only since the Second World War. For the previous 300-odd years of American history we didn't have zoning laws. We had a popular consensus about the right way to assemble a town or a city. Our best Main Streets and Elm Streets were created not by municipal ordinances but by cultural agreement. Everybody agreed that buildings on Main Street ought to be more than one story tall; that corner groceries were good to have in residential neighborhoods; that streets ought to intersect with other streets to facilitate movement; that sidewalks were necessary, and that orderly rows of trees planted along them made the sidewalks much more pleasant; that roofs should be pitched to shed rain and snow; that doors should be conspicuous, so that one could easily find the entrance to a building; that windows should be vertical, to dignify a house. Everybody agreed that communities needed different kinds of housing to meet the needs of different kinds of families and individuals, and the market was allowed to supply them. Our great-grandparents didn't have to argue endlessly over these matters of civic design. Nor did they have to reinvent civic design every fifty years because no one could remember what had been agreed on.

Everybody agreed that both private and public buildings should be ornamented and embellished to honor the public realm of the street, so town halls, firehouses, banks, and homes were built that today are on the National Register of Historic Places. We can't replicate any of that stuff. Our laws actually forbid it. Want to build a bank in Anytown, USA? Fine. Make sure that it's surrounded by at least an acre of parking, and that it's set back from the street at least seventy-five feet. (Of course, it will be one story.) The instructions for a church or a muffler shop are identical. That's exactly what your laws tell you to build. If you deviate from the template, you will not receive a building permit.

Therefore, if you want to make your community better, begin at once by throwing out your zoning laws. Don't revise

them—get rid of them. Set them on fire if possible and make a public ceremony of it; public ceremony is a great way to announce the birth of a new consensus. While you're at it, throw out your "master plan" too. It's invariably just as bad. Replace these things with a traditional town-planning ordinance that prescribes a more desirable everyday environment.

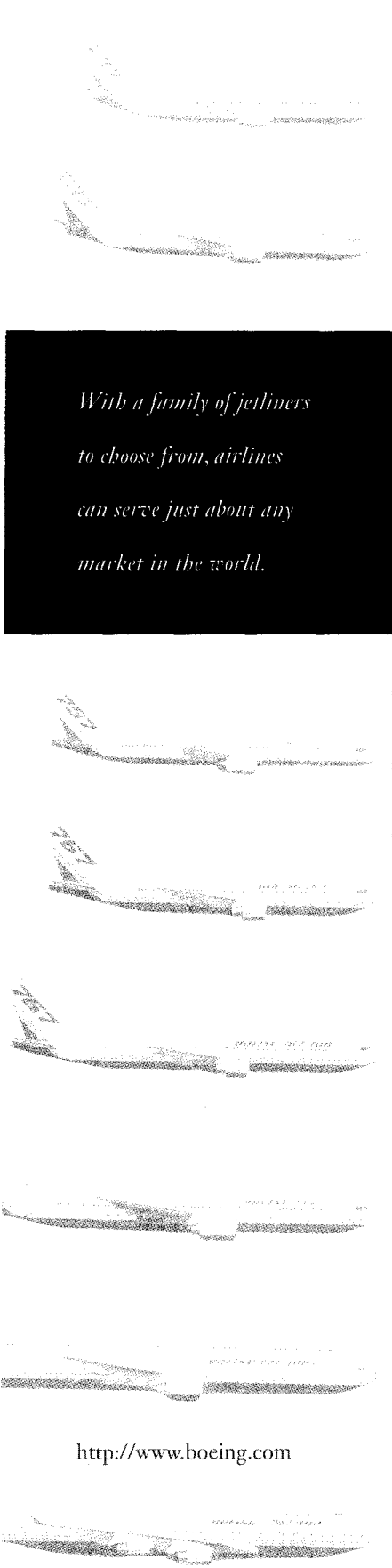
The practice of zoning started early in the twentieth century, at a time when industry had reached an enormous scale. The noisy, smelly, dirty operations of gigantic factories came to overshadow and oppress all other aspects of city life, and civic authorities decided that they had to be separated from everything else, especially residential neighborhoods. One could say that single-use zoning, as it came to be called, was a reasonable response to the social and economic experiment called industrialism.

After the Second World War, however, that set of ideas was taken to an absurd extreme. Zoning itself began to overshadow all the historic elements of civic art and civic life. For instance, because the democratic masses of people used their cars to shop, and masses of cars required parking lots, shopping was declared an obnoxious industrial activity around which people shouldn't be allowed to live. This tended to destroy age-old physical relationships between shopping and living, as embodied, say, in Main Street.

What zoning produces is suburban sprawl, which must be understood as the product of a particular set of instructions. Its chief characteristics are the strict separation of human activities, mandatory driving to get from one activity to another, and huge supplies of free parking. After all, the basic idea of zoning is that every activity demands a separate zone of its own. For people to live around shopping would be harmful and indecent. Better not even to allow them within walking distance of it. They'll need their cars to haul all that stuff home anyway. While we're at it, let's separate the homes by income gradients. Don't let the \$75,000-a-year families live near the \$200,000-a-year families—they'll bring down property values—and for God's sake don't let a \$25,000-a-year recent college graduate or a \$19,000-a-year widowed grandmother on Social Security live near any of them. There goes the neighborhood! Now put all the workplaces in separate office "parks" or industrial "parks," and make sure nobody can walk to them either. As for public squares, parks, and the like—forget it. We can't afford them, because we spent all our funds paving the four-lane highways and collector roads and parking lots, and laying sewer and water lines out to the housing subdivisions, and hiring traffic cops to regulate the movement of people in their cars going back and forth among these segregated activities.

The model of the human habitat dictated by zoning is a formless, soul-less, centerless, demoralizing mess. It bankrupts families and townships. It disables whole classes of decent, normal citizens. It ruins the air we breathe. It corrupts and deadens our spirit.

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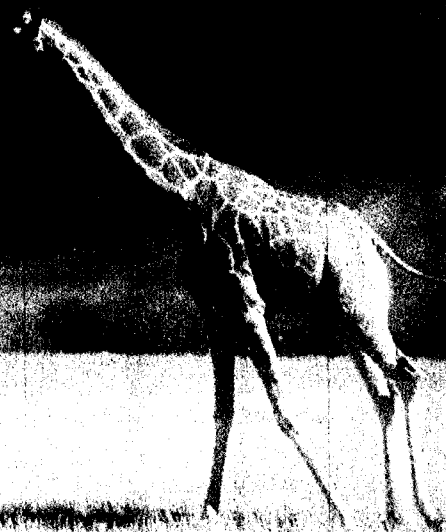
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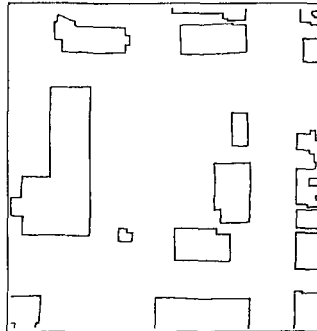
BOEING

The construction industry likes it, because it requires stupendous amounts of cement, asphalt, and steel and a lot of heavy equipment and personnel to push all this stuff into place. Car dealers love it. Politicians used to love it, because it produced big short-term profits and short-term revenue gains, but now they're all mixed up about it, because the voters who live in suburban sprawl don't want more of the same built around them—which implies that at some dark level suburban-sprawl dwellers are quite conscious of sprawl's shortcomings. They have a word for it: "growth." They're now against growth. Their lips curl when they utter the word. They sense that new construction is only going to make the place where they live worse. They're convinced that the future is going to be worse than the past. And they're right, because the future has been getting worse throughout their lifetime. Growth means only more traffic, bigger parking lots, and buildings ever bigger and uglier than the monstrosities of the sixties, seventies, and eighties.

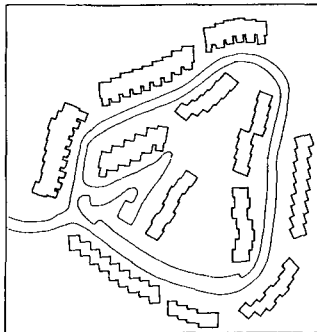
So they become NIMBYS ("not in my back yard") and BANANAS ("build absolutely nothing anywhere near anything"). If they're successful in their NIMBYism, they'll use their town government to torture developers (people who create growth) with layer upon layer of bureaucratic rigmarole, so that only a certified masochist would apply to build something there. Eventually the unwanted growth leapfrogs over them to cheap, vacant rural land farther out, and then all the new commuters in the farther-out suburb choke the NIMBYS' roads anyway, to get to the existing mall in NIMBYville.

Unfortunately, the NIMBYS don't have a better model in mind. They go to better places on holiday weekends—Nantucket, St. Augustine, little New England towns—but they

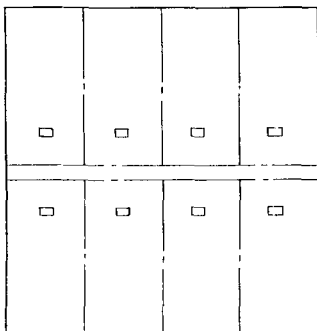
CURRENT ZONING CODES



Commercial sprawl



Apartment complex

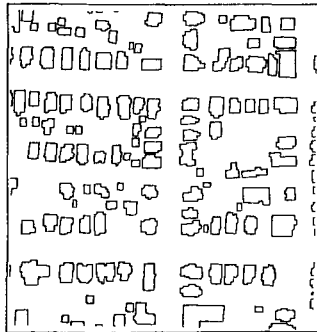


Housing subdivision

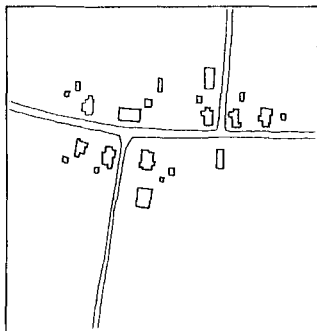
TRADITIONAL NEIGHBORHOOD DESIGN



City blocks



Small town



Village

think of these places as special exceptions. It never occurs to NIMBY tourists that their own home places could be that good too. *Make Massapequa like Nantucket? Where would I park?* Exactly.

These special places are modeled on a pre-automobile template. They were designed for a human scale and in some respects maintained that way. Such a thing is unimaginable to us today. We must design for the automobile, because . . . because all our laws and habits tell us we must. Notice that you can get to all these special places in your car. It's just a nuisance to use the car while you're there—so you stash it someplace for the duration of your visit and get around perfectly happily on foot, by bicycle, in a cab, or on public transit. The same is true, by the way, of London, Paris, and Venice.

The future will not allow us to continue using cars the way we've been accustomed to in the unprecedented conditions of the late twentieth century.

So, whether we adore suburbia or not, we're going to have to live differently. Rather than being a tragedy, this is actually an extremely lucky situation, a wonderful opportunity, because we are now free to redesign our everyday world in a way that is going to make all classes of Americans much happier. We do not have to come up with tools and techniques never seen before. The principles of town planning can be found in excellent books written before the Second World War. Three-dimensional models of the kinds of places that can result from these principles exist in the form of historic towns and cities. In fact, after two generations of architectural amnesia, this knowledge has been reinstalled in the brains of professional designers in active practice all over the country, and these designers have already begun to create an alternate model of the human habitat for the twenty-first century.

What's missing is a more widespread consensus—a cultural agreement—in favor of the new model, and the will to go forward with it. Large numbers of ordinary citizens haven't heard the news. They're stuck in old habits and stuck in the psychology of previous investment; political leadership reflects this all over America. NIMBYism is one of the results, a form of hysterical cultural paralysis. *Don't build anything! Don't change anything!* The consensus that exists, therefore, is a consensus of fear, and that is obviously not good enough. We need a consensus of hope.

In the absence of a widespread consensus about how to build a better everyday environment, we'll have to replace the old set of rules with an explicit new set—or, to put it a slightly different way, replace zoning laws with principles of civic art. It will take time for these principles to become second nature again, to become common sense. It may not happen at all, in which case we ought to be very concerned. In the event that this body of ideas gains widespread acceptance, think of all the time and money we'll save! No more endless nights down at the zoning board watching the NIMBYS scream at the mall developers. No more real-estate-related lawsuits. We will have time, instead, to become better people and to enjoy our lives on a planet full of beauty and mystery. Here, then, are some of the things citizens will need to know in order to create a new model for the everyday environment of America.

The New Urbanism

THE principles apply equally to villages, towns, and cities. Most of them apply even to places of extraordinarily high density, like Manhattan, with added provisions that I will not go into here, in part because special cases like Manhattan are so rare, and in part because I be-

lieve that the scale of even our greatest cities will necessarily have to become smaller in the future, at no loss to their dynamism (London and Paris are plenty dynamic, with few buildings over ten stories high).

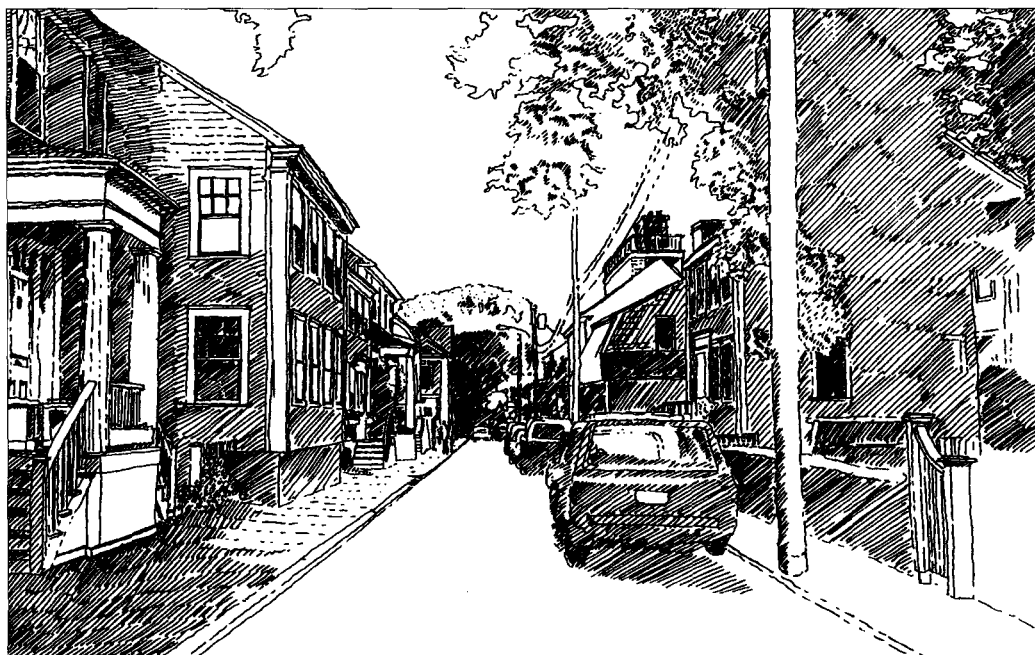
The pattern under discussion here has been called variously neo-traditional planning, traditional neighborhood development, low-density urbanism, transit-oriented development, the new urbanism, and just plain civic art. Its principles produce settings that resemble American towns from prior to the Second World War.

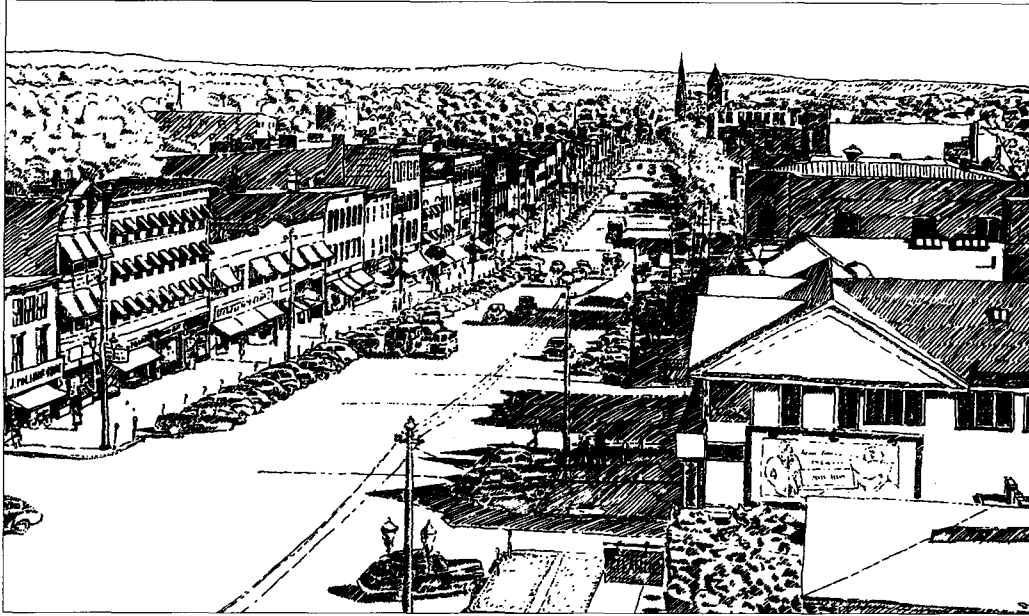
1. The basic unit of planning is the neighborhood. A neighborhood standing alone is a hamlet or village. A cluster of neighborhoods becomes a town. Clusters of a great many neighborhoods become a city. The population of a neighborhood can vary depending on local conditions.

2. The neighborhood is limited in physical size, with well-defined edges and a focused center. The size of a neighborhood is defined as a five-minute walking distance (or a quarter mile) from the edge to the center and a ten-minute walk edge to edge. Human scale is the standard for proportions in buildings and their accessories. Automobiles and other wheeled vehicles are permitted, but they do not take precedence over human needs, including aesthetic needs. The neighborhood contains a public-transit stop.

3. The secondary units of planning are corridors and districts. Corridors form the boundaries between neighborhoods, both connecting and defining them. Corridors can incorporate natural features like streams and canyons. They can take the form of parks, nature preserves, travel corridors, railroad lines, or some combination of these. In towns and cities a neighborhood or parts of neighborhoods can compose a district. Districts are made up of streets or ensembles of streets where special activities get preferential treatment.

Americans pay premium prices to vacation in towns with traditional streets like this one on Nantucket. Trees, fences, railings, walls, lampposts, and front gardens help to scale and shape the civic space





In America the street is the pre-eminent kind of public space and Main Street is the pre-eminent kind of street. Buildings meet the sidewalk edge, forming a wall that gives Main Street the feeling of an outdoor room. People can live and work in the upper stories above the shopping

The French Quarter of New Orleans is an example of a district. It is a whole neighborhood dedicated to entertainment, in which housing, shops, and offices are also integral. A corridor can also be a district—for instance, a major shopping avenue between adjoining neighborhoods.

4. The neighborhood is emphatically mixed-use and provides housing for people with different incomes. Buildings may be various in function but must be compatible with one another in size and in their relation to the street. The needs of daily life are accessible within the five-minute walk. Commerce is integrated with residential, business, and even manufacturing use, though not necessarily on the same street in a given neighborhood. Apartments are permitted over stores. Forms of housing are mixed, including apartments, duplex and single-family houses, accessory apartments, and outbuildings. (Over time streets will inevitably evolve to become less or more desirable. But attempts to preserve property values by mandating minimum-square-footage requirements, outlawing rental apartments, or formulating other strategies to exclude lower-income residents must be avoided. Even the best streets in the world's best towns can accommodate people of various incomes.)

5. Buildings are disciplined on their lots in order to define public space successfully. The street is understood to be the pre-eminent form of public space, and the buildings that define it are expected to honor and embellish it.

6. The street pattern is conceived as a network in order to create the greatest number of alternative routes from one part of the neighborhood to another. This has the beneficial effect of relieving traffic congestion. The network may be a grid. Networks based on a grid must be modified by parks, squares, diagonals, T intersections, rotaries, and other devices that relieve the grid's tendency to monotonous regularity. The streets exist in a hierarchy from broad boulevards to narrow lanes and

alleys. In a town or a city limited-access highways may exist only within a corridor, preferably in the form of parkways. Cul-de-sacs are strongly discouraged except under extraordinary circumstances—for example, where rugged topography requires them.

7. Civic buildings, such as town halls, churches, schools, libraries, and museums, are placed on preferential building sites, such as the frontage of squares, in neighborhood centers, and where street vistas terminate, in order to serve as landmarks and reinforce their symbolic importance. Buildings define parks and squares, which are distributed throughout the neighborhood and appropriately designed for recreation, repose, periodic commercial uses, and special events such as political meetings, concerts, theatricals, exhibitions, and fairs. Because streets will differ in importance, scale, and quality, what is appropriate for a part of town with small houses may not be appropriate as the town's main shopping street. These distinctions are properly expressed by physical design.

8. In the absence of a consensus about the appropriate decoration of buildings, an architectural code may be devised to establish some fundamental unities of massing, fenestration, materials, and roof pitch, within which many variations may function harmoniously.

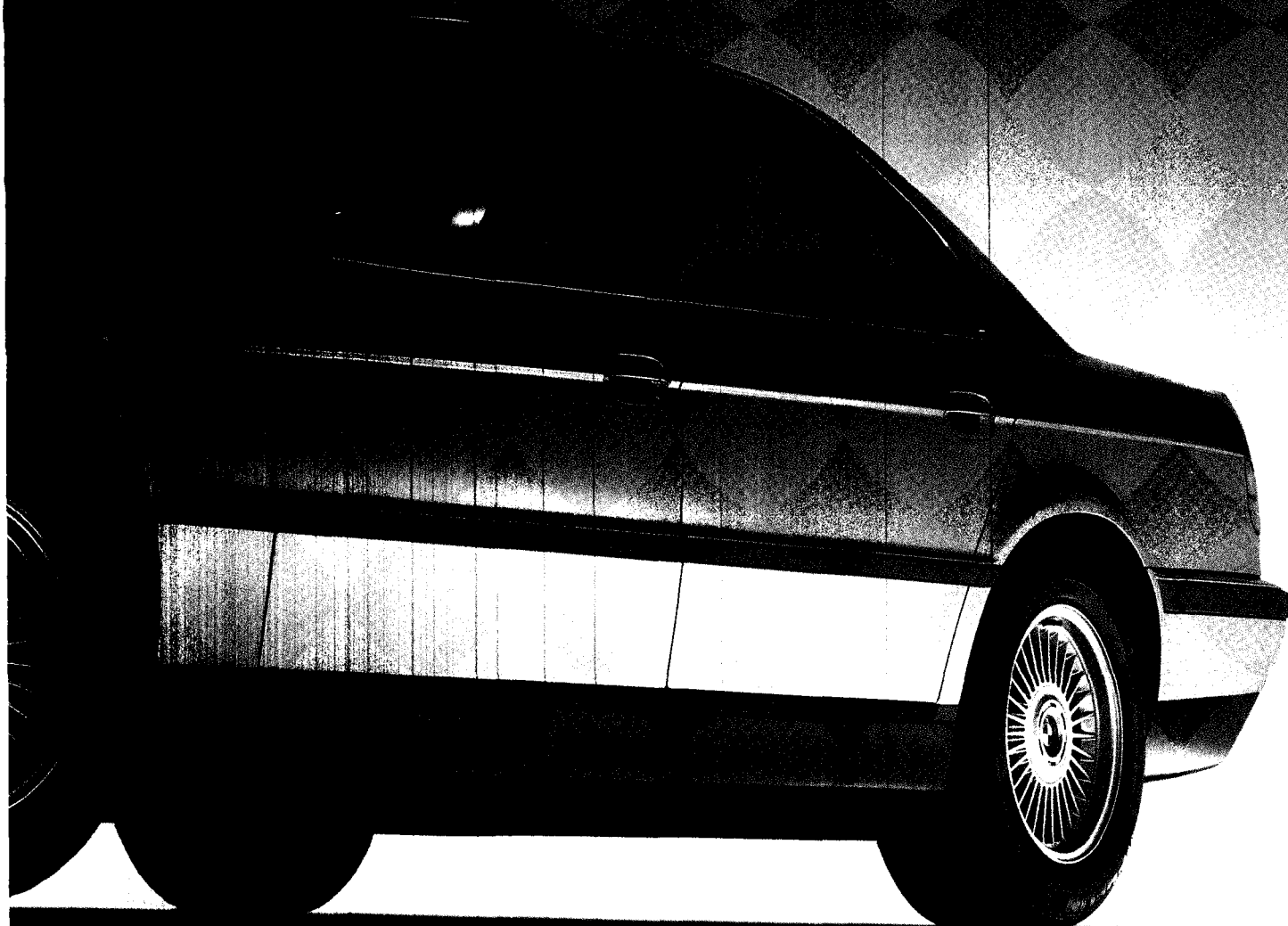
Under the regime of zoning and the professional overspecialization that it fostered, all streets were made as wide as possible because the specialist in charge—the traffic engineer—was concerned solely with the movement of cars and trucks. In the process much of the traditional decor that made streets pleasant for people was gotten rid of. For instance, street trees were eliminated. Orderly rows of mature trees can improve even the most dismal street by softening hard edges and sunblasted bleakness. Under postwar engineering standards street trees were deemed a hazard to motorists and chopped down in many American towns.

20 THINGS YOU SHOULD DO IN THIS LIFETIME.

- 1) Visit the country your ancestors called home.
- 2) Leave a dollar where a kid will find it.
- 3) Fly over the Grand Canyon in a helicopter.
- 4) Lend money to a friend without expecting it back.
- 5) Have a suit made by a Savile Row tailor.
- 6) Ride in a gondola down the Grand Canal in Venice.
- 7) Teach a class.
- 8) See the sun rise over the ruins at Machu Picchu.
- 9) Plant a tree.
- 10) Fly on the Concorde.
- 11) Stand on the Great Wall.
- 12) Make your own beer.
- 13) See an opera at La Scala in Milan.
- 14) Learn to speak French.
- 15) Take a balloon ride over the Serengeti.
- 16) Be able to recite three good toasts.
- 17) Kiss someone passionately in public.
- 18) Play the Old Course at St. Andrews.
- 19) Shoot the rapids on the Snake River in Idaho.

20)





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Introducing the BMW 7-Series for 1997.

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Accommodating Automobiles

THE practice of maximizing car movement at the expense of all other concerns was applied with particular zeal to suburban housing subdivisions. Suburban streets were given the characteristics of county highways, though children played in them. Suburban developments notoriously lack parks. The spacious private lots were supposed to make up for the lack of parks, but children have a tendency to play in the street anyway—bicycles and roller skates don't work well on the lawn. Out in the subdivisions, where trees along the sides of streets were often expressly forbidden, we see those asinine exercises in romantic landscaping that attempt to recapitulate the forest primeval in clumps of ornamental juniper. In a setting so inimical to walking, sidewalks were often deemed a waste of money.

In the new urbanism the meaning of the street as the essential fabric of the public realm is restored. The space created is understood to function as an outdoor room, and building façades are understood to be street walls.

Thoroughfares are distinguished by their character as well as by their capacity. The hierarchy of streets begins with the boulevard, featuring express lanes in the center, local lanes on the sides, and tree-planted medians between the express and local lanes, with parallel parking along all curbs. Next in the hierarchy is the multilane avenue with a median. Then comes a main shopping street, with no median. This is followed by two or more orders of ordinary streets (apt to be residential in character), and finally the lane or alley, which intersects blocks and becomes the preferred location for garages and accessory apartments.

Parallel parking is emphatically permitted along the curbs of all streets, except under the most extraordinary conditions. Parallel parking is desirable for two reasons: parked cars create a physical barrier and psychological buffer that protects pedestrians on the sidewalk from moving vehicles; and a rich supply of parallel parking can eliminate the need for parking lots, which are extremely destructive of the civic fabric. Anyone who thinks that parallel parking "ruins" a residential street should take a look at some of the most desirable real estate in America: Georgetown, Beacon Hill, Nob Hill, Alexandria, Charleston, Savannah, Annapolis, Princeton, Greenwich Village, Marblehead. All permit parallel parking.

Residential streets can and should be narrower than current specifications permit. In general, cars need not move at speeds greater than 20 m.p.h. within a neighborhood. Higher speeds can be reserved for boulevards or parkways, which occupy corridors. Within neighborhoods the explicit intent is to calm and tame vehicular traffic. This is achieved by the use of corners with sharp turning radii, partly textured pavements, and T intersections. The result of these practices is a more civilized street.

Even under ideal circumstances towns and cities will have some streets that are better than others. Over time streets tend to sort themselves out in a hierarchy of quality as well as size. The new urbanism recognizes this tendency, especially in city commercial districts, and designates streets A or B. B streets may contain less-desirable structures—for instance, parking-garage entrances, pawnshops, a homeless shelter, a Burger King—without disrupting the A streets in proximity. This does not mean that B streets are allowed to be deliberately squalid. Even here the public realm deserves respect. Cars are still not given dominion. A decent standard of detailing applies to B streets with respect to sidewalks, lighting, and even trees.

Property Values and Affordable Housing

ZONING required the artificial creation of "affordable housing," because the rules of zoning prohibited the very conditions that formerly made housing available to all income groups and integrated it into the civic fabric. Accessory apartments became illegal in most neighborhoods, particularly in new suburbs. Without provision for apartments, an unmarried sixth-grade schoolteacher could not afford to live near the children she taught. Nor could the housecleaner and the gardener—they had to commute for half an hour from some distant low-income ghetto. In many localities apartments over stores were also forbidden under the zoning laws. Few modern shopping centers are more than one story in height, and I know of no suburban malls that incorporate housing. In eliminating arrangements like these we have eliminated the most common form of affordable housing, found virtually all over the rest of the world. By zoning these things out, we've zoned out Main Street, USA.

The best way to make housing affordable is to build or restore compact, mixed-use, traditional American neighborhoods. The way to preserve property values is to recognize that a house is part of a community, not an isolated object, and to make sure that the community maintains high standards of civic amenity in the form of walkable streets and easy access to shops, recreation, culture, and public beauty.

Towns built before the Second World War contain more-desirable and less-desirable residential streets, but even the best can have income-integrated housing. A \$350,000 house can exist next to a \$180,000 house with a \$600-a-month garage apartment (which has the added benefit of helping the homeowner pay a substantial portion of his mortgage). Such a street might house two millionaires, eleven professionals, a dozen wage workers, sixteen children, three full-time mothers, a college student, two grandmothers on Social Security, and a bachelor fireman. That is a street that will maintain its value and bring people of different ages and occupations into informal contact.

Density, Not Congestion

“CONGESTION” was the scare word of the past, as “growth” is the scare word of our time. The fear of congestion sprang from the atrocious conditions in urban slums at the turn of the century. The Lower East Side of Manhattan in 1900 is said to have contained more inhabitants per square mile than are found in modern-day Calcutta. If crowding had been confined to the slums, it might not have made such an impact on the public imagination. But urban congestion was aggravated by the revolutionary effects of the elevator, the office skyscraper, the sudden mass replication of large apartment buildings, and the widespread introduction of the automobile. These innovations drastically altered the scale and tone of city life. Within a generation cities went from being dynamic to being—or at least seeming—frighteningly overcrowded. Those with the money to commute were easily persuaded to get out, and thus in the 1920s came the first mass evacuation to new suburbs, reachable primarily by automobile. The movement was slowed by the Great Depression and then by the Second World War.

The memory of all that lingers. Tremendous confusion about density and congestion persists in America today, even though most urban areas and even many small towns (like my own) now suffer from density deficits. Too few people live, and businesses operate, at the core to maintain the synergies necessary for civic life. The new urbanism proposes a restoration of synergistic density, within reasonable limits. These limits are controlled by building size. The new urbanism calls for higher density—more houses per acre, closer together—than zoning does. However, the new urbanism is modeled not on the urban slum but on the traditional American town. This is not a pattern of life that should frighten reasonable people. Millions pay forty dollars a day to walk through a grossly oversimplified version of it at Disney World. It conforms exactly to their most cherished fantasies about the ideal living arrangement.

Houses may be freestanding in the new urbanism, but their lots are smaller than those in sprawling subdivisions. Streets of connected row houses are also deemed desirable. Useless front lawns are often eliminated. The new urbanism compensates for this loss by providing squares, parks, greens, and other useful, high-quality civic amenities. The new urbanism also creates streets of beauty and character.

This model does not suffer from congestion. Occupancy laws remain in force—sixteen families aren’t jammed into one building, as in the tenements of yore. Back yards provide plenty of privacy, and houses can be large and spacious on their lots. People and cars are able to circulate freely in the network of streets. The car is not needed for trips to the store, the school, or other local places. This pattern encourages good connections between people and their commercial and cultural institutions.

The crude street pattern of zoning, with its cul-de-sacs and collector streets, actually promotes congestion, because absolutely every trip out of the single-use residential pod must be made by car onto the collector street. The worst congestion in America today takes place not in the narrow streets of traditional neighborhoods such as Georgetown and Alexandria but on the six-lane collector streets of Tysons Corner, Virginia, and other places created by zoning. Because of the extremely poor connectivity inherent in them, such products of zoning have much of the infrastructure of a city and the culture of a backwater.

Composing a Street Wall

IN order for a street to achieve the intimate and welcoming quality of an outdoor room, the buildings along it must compose a suitable street wall. Whereas they may vary in style and expression, some fundamental agreement, some unity, must pull buildings into alignment. Think of one of those fine side streets of row houses on the Upper East Side of New York. They may express in masonry every historical fantasy from neo-Egyptian to Ruskinian Gothic. But they are all close to the same height, and even if their windows don’t line up precisely, they all run to four or five stories. They all stand directly along the sidewalk. They share materials: stone and brick. They are not interrupted by vacant spaces or parking lots. About half of them are homes; the rest may be diplomatic offices or art galleries. The various uses co-exist in harmony. The same may be said of streets on Chicago’s North Side, in Savannah, on Beacon Hill, in Georgetown, in Pacific Heights, and in many other ultra-desirable neighborhoods across the country.

Similarly, buildings must be sized in proportion to the width of the street. Low buildings do a poor job of defining streets, especially overly wide streets, as anyone who has been on a postwar commercial highway strip can tell. The road is too wide and the cars go too fast. The parking lots are fearsome wastelands. The buildings themselves are barely visible—that is why gigantic internally lit signs are necessary. The relationship between buildings and space fails utterly in this case. In many residential suburbs, too, the buildings do a poor job of defining space. The houses are low; the front lawns and streets are too wide. Sidewalks and orderly rows of trees are absent. The space between the houses is an incomprehensible abyss.

The new urbanism advances specific solutions for these ills—both for existing towns and cities and to mitigate the current problems of the suburbs. Commerce is removed from the highway strip and reassembled in a town or neighborhood center. The buildings that house commerce are required to be at least two stories high and may be higher, and this has the additional benefit of establishing apartments and offices above the shops to bring vitality, along with extra rents, to the center. Buildings on designated shopping streets near the center

are encouraged to house retail businesses on the ground floor.

A build-to line determines how close buildings will stand to the street and promotes regular alignment. Zoning has a seemingly similar feature called the setback line, but it is intended to keep buildings far away from the street in order to create parking lots, particularly in front, where parking lots are considered to be a WELCOME sign to motorists. When buildings stand in isolation like this, the unfortunate effect is their complete failure to define space: the abyss. In the new urbanism the build-to line is meant to ensure the opposite outcome: the positive definition of space by pulling buildings forward to the street. If parking lots are necessary, they should be behind the buildings, in the middle of the block, where they will not disrupt civic life.

Additional rules govern building height, recess lines according to which upper stories may be set back, and transition lines, which denote a distinction between ground floors for retail use and upper floors for offices and apartments. (Paris, under Baron Haussmann, was coded for an eleven-meter-high transition line, which is one reason for the phenomenal unity and character of Parisian boulevards.)

In traditional American town planning the standard increments for lots have been based on twenty-five feet of street frontage, which have allowed for twenty-five-foot row houses and storefronts, and fifty-, seventy-five-, and 100-foot lots for free-standing houses. Unfortunately, the old standard is slightly out of whack with what is needed to park cars efficiently. Therefore, under the new urbanism lot size will be based on the rod (sixteen and a half feet), a classic unit of measurement. This allows for a minimum townhouse lot of sixteen and a half feet, which has room for parking one car in the rear (off an alley) plus a few feet for pedestrians to walk around the car. The 1.5-rod townhouse lot permits two cars to park in the rear. The two-rod lot allows for a townhouse with parking for two cars plus a small side yard. Three rods allows for a standard detached house with on-site parking in different

configurations. The four-rod lot provides room for a very large detached building (house, shops, offices, or apartments) with parking for as many as ten cars in the rear. The issue of a standard increment based on the rod is far from settled. Some new-urbanist practitioners recommend an adjustable standard of twelve to eighteen feet, based on local conditions.

The new urbanism recognizes zones of transition between the public realm of the street and the semi-private realm of the shop or the private realm of the house. (In the world of zoning this refinement is nonexistent.) Successful transitions are achieved by regulating such devices as the arcade, the storefront, the dooryard, the ensemble of porch and fence, even the front lawn. These devices of transition soften the visual and



The sidewalk is an ensemble, including more than the pedestrian path itself: a planting strip with orderly rows of trees and a curb that can accommodate parked cars also contribute to the safety of pedestrians

psychological hard edges of the everyday world, allowing us to move between these zones with appropriate degrees of ease or friction. (They are therefore at odds with the harsh geometries and polished surfaces of Modernism.)

The arcade, for instance, affords shelter along the sidewalk on a street of shops. It is especially desirable in southern climates where both harsh sunlight and frequent downpours occur. The arcade must shelter the entire sidewalk, not just a portion of it, or else it tends to become an obstacle rather than an amenity. Porches on certain streets may be required to be set

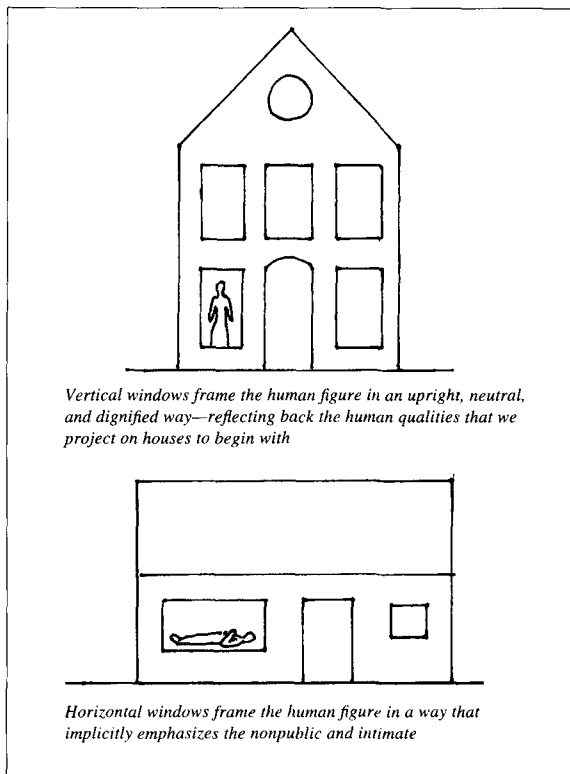
back no more than a “conversational distance” from the sidewalk, to aid communication between the public and private realms. The low picket fence plays its part in the ensemble as a gentle physical barrier, reminding pedestrians that the zone between the sidewalk and the porch is private while still permitting verbal and visual communication. In some conditions a front lawn is appropriate. Large, ornate civic buildings often merit a lawn, because they cannot be visually comprehended close up. Mansions merit setbacks with lawns for similar reasons.

Architectural Codes

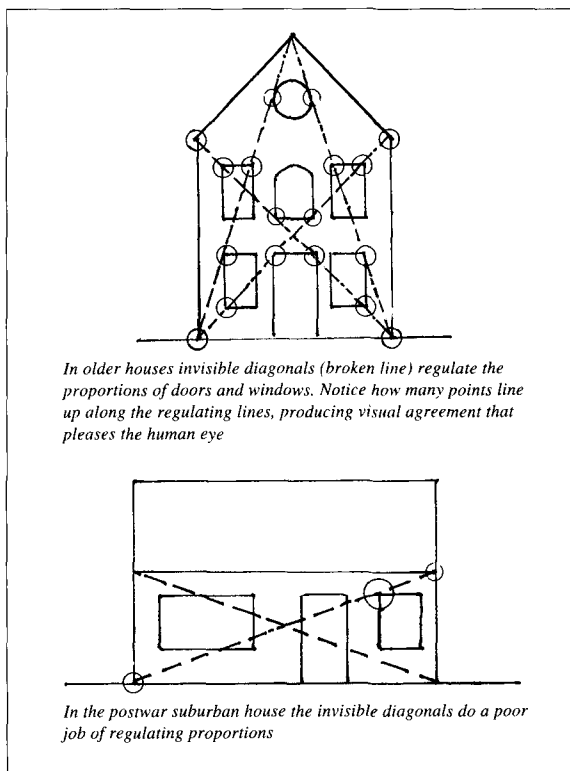
THE foregoing presents the “urban code” of the new urbanism, but architectural codes operate at a more detailed and refined level. In theory a good urban code alone can create the conditions that make civic life possible, by holding to a standard of excellence in a town’s basic design framework. Architectural codes establish a standard of excellence for individual buildings, particularly the surface details. Variances to codes may be granted on the basis of architectural merit. The new urbanism does not favor any particular style.

Nowadays houses are often designed from the inside out. A married couple wants a fanlight window over the bed, or a little octagonal window over the Jacuzzi, and a builder or architect designs the room around that wish. This approach does not take into account how the house will end up looking on the outside. The outside ceases

VERTICAL WINDOWS VERSUS HORIZONTAL WINDOWS



REGULATING LINES PROVIDE VISUAL AGREEMENT



to matter. This is socially undesirable. It degrades the community. It encourages people to stay inside, lessening surveillance on the street, reducing opportunities for making connections, and in the long term causing considerable damage to the everyday environment.

The new urbanism declares that the outside *does* matter, so a few simple rules re-establish the necessary design discipline for individual buildings. For example, a certain proportion of each exterior wall will be devoted to windows. Suddenly houses will no longer look like television sets, where only the front matters. Another rule may state that windows must be vertical or square, not horizontal—because horizontal windows tend to subvert the inherent dignity of the standing human figure. This rule reinstates a basic principle of architecture that, unfortunately, has been abandoned or forgotten in America—and has resulted in millions of terrible-looking houses.

Likewise, the front porch is an important and desirable element in some neighborhoods. A porch less than six feet deep is useless except for storage, because it provides too little room for furniture and the circulation of human bodies. Builders tack on inadequate porches as a sales gimmick to enhance “curb appeal,” so that the real-estate agent can drive up with the customer and say, “Look, a front porch!” The porch becomes a cartoon feature of the house, like the little fake cupola on the garage. This saves the builders money in time and materials. Perhaps they assume that the street will be too repulsive to sit next to.

Why do builders even bother with pathetic-looking cartoon porches? Apparently Americans need at least the idea of a porch to be reassured, symbolically, that they're decent people living in a decent place. But the cartoon porch only compounds the degradation of the public realm.

In America today flat roofs are the norm in commercial construction. This is a legacy of Modernism, and we're suffering because of it. The roofscapes of our communities are boring and dreary as well as vulnerable to leakage or collapse in the face of heavy rain or snow. An interesting roofscape can be a joy—and a life worth living is composed of many joys. Once Modernism had expanded beyond Europe to America, it developed a hidden agenda: to give developers a moral and intellectual justification for putting up cheap buildings. One of the best ways to save money on a building is to put a flat roof on it.

Aggravating matters was the tendency in postwar America to regard buildings as throwaway commodities, like cars.

Colonial, or whatever—though they certainly could if they were sufficiently detailed and rigorous. But style is emphatically not the point. The point is to achieve a standard of excellence in design for the benefit of the community as a whole. Is anything wrong with standards of excellence? Should we continue the experiment of trying to live without them?

Getting the Rules Changed

REPLACING the crude idiocies of zoning with true civic art has proved to be a monumentally difficult task. It has been attempted in many places around the United States over the past fifteen years, mainly by developers, professional town planners, and architects who are members of the new-urbanist movement. They have succeeded in a few places. The status quo has remarkable staying power, no matter how miserable it makes people, including the local

An architectural code establishes some fundamental unities of design within which many personal tastes may be expressed, as in these façades



That flat roofs began to leak after a few years didn't matter; by then the building was a candidate for demolition. That attitude has now infected all architecture and development. Low standards that wouldn't have been acceptable in our grandparents' day, when this was a less affluent country, are today perfectly normal. The new urbanism seeks to redress this substandard normality. It recognizes that a distinctive roofline is architecturally appropriate and spiritually desirable in the everyday environment. Pitched roofs and their accessories, including towers, are favored explicitly by codes. Roofing materials can also be specified if a community wants a high standard of construction.

Architectural codes should be viewed as a supplement to an urban code. Architectural codes are not intended to impose a particular style on a neighborhood—Victorian, neoclassical,

officials who support it and who have to live in the same junk environment as everybody else. An enormous entrenched superstructure of bureaucratic agencies at state and federal levels also supports zoning and its accessories. Departments of transportation, the Federal Housing Administration, the various tax agencies, and so on all have a long-standing stake in policies that promote and heavily subsidize suburban sprawl. They're not going to renounce those policies without a struggle. Any change in a rule about land development makes or breaks people who seek to become millionaires. Ban sprawl, and some guy who bought twenty acres to build a strip mall is out of business, while somebody else with three weed-filled lots downtown suddenly has more-valuable property.

I believe that we have entered a kind of slow-motion cultural meltdown, owing largely to our living habits, though many

ordinary Americans wouldn't agree. They may or may not be doing all right in the changing economy, but they have personal and psychological investments in going about business as usual. Many Americans have chosen to live in suburbia out of a historic antipathy for life in the city and particularly a fear of the underclass that has come to dwell there. They would sooner move to the dark side of the moon than consider city life.

Americans still have considerable affection for small towns, but small towns present a slightly different problem: in the past fifty years many towns have received a suburban-sprawl zoning overlay that has made them indistinguishable from the sprawl matrix that surrounds them. In my town strip malls and fast-food joints have invaded what used to be a much denser core, and nearly ruined it.

Notwithstanding all these obstacles, zoning must go, and zoning will go. In its place we will re-establish a consensus for doing things better, along with formal town-planning codes to spell out the terms. I maintain that the change will occur whether we love suburbia or not.

Fortunately, a democratic process for making this change exists. It has the advantage of being a highly localized process, geared to individual communities. It is called the charette. In its expanded modern meaning, a "charette" is a week-long professional design workshop held for the purpose of planning land development or redevelopment. It includes public meetings that bring all the participants together in one room—developers, architects, citizens, government officials, traffic engineers, environmentalists, and so on. These meetings are meant to get all issues on the table and settle as many of them as possible. This avoids the otherwise usual, inevitably gruesome process of conflict resolution performed by lawyers—which is to say, a hugely expensive waste of society's resources benefiting only lawyers.

The object of the charette is not, however, to produce verbiage but to produce results on paper in the form of drawings and plans. This highlights an essential difference between zoning codes and traditional town planning based on civic art. Zoning codes are invariably twenty-seven-inch-high stacks of numbers and legalistic language that few people other than technical specialists understand. Because this is so, local zoning- and planning-board members frequently don't understand their own zoning laws. Zoning has great advantages for specialists, namely lawyers and traffic engineers, in that they profit financially by being the arbiters of the regulations, or benefit professionally by being able to impose their special technical needs (say, for cars) over the needs of citizens—without the public's being involved in their decisions.

Traditional town planning produces pictorial codes that any normal citizen can comprehend. This is democratic and ethical as well as practical. It elevates the quality of the public discussion about development. People can see what they're talking

about. Such codes show a desired outcome at the same time that they depict formal specifications. They're much more useful than the reams of balderdash found in zoning codes.

An exemplary town-planning code devised by Andres Duany, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, and others can be found in the ninth edition of *Architectural Graphic Standards*. The code runs a brief fourteen pages. About 75 percent of the content is pictures—of street sections, blocks, building lots, building types, and street networks. Although it is generic, a code of similar brevity could easily be devised for localized conditions all over America.

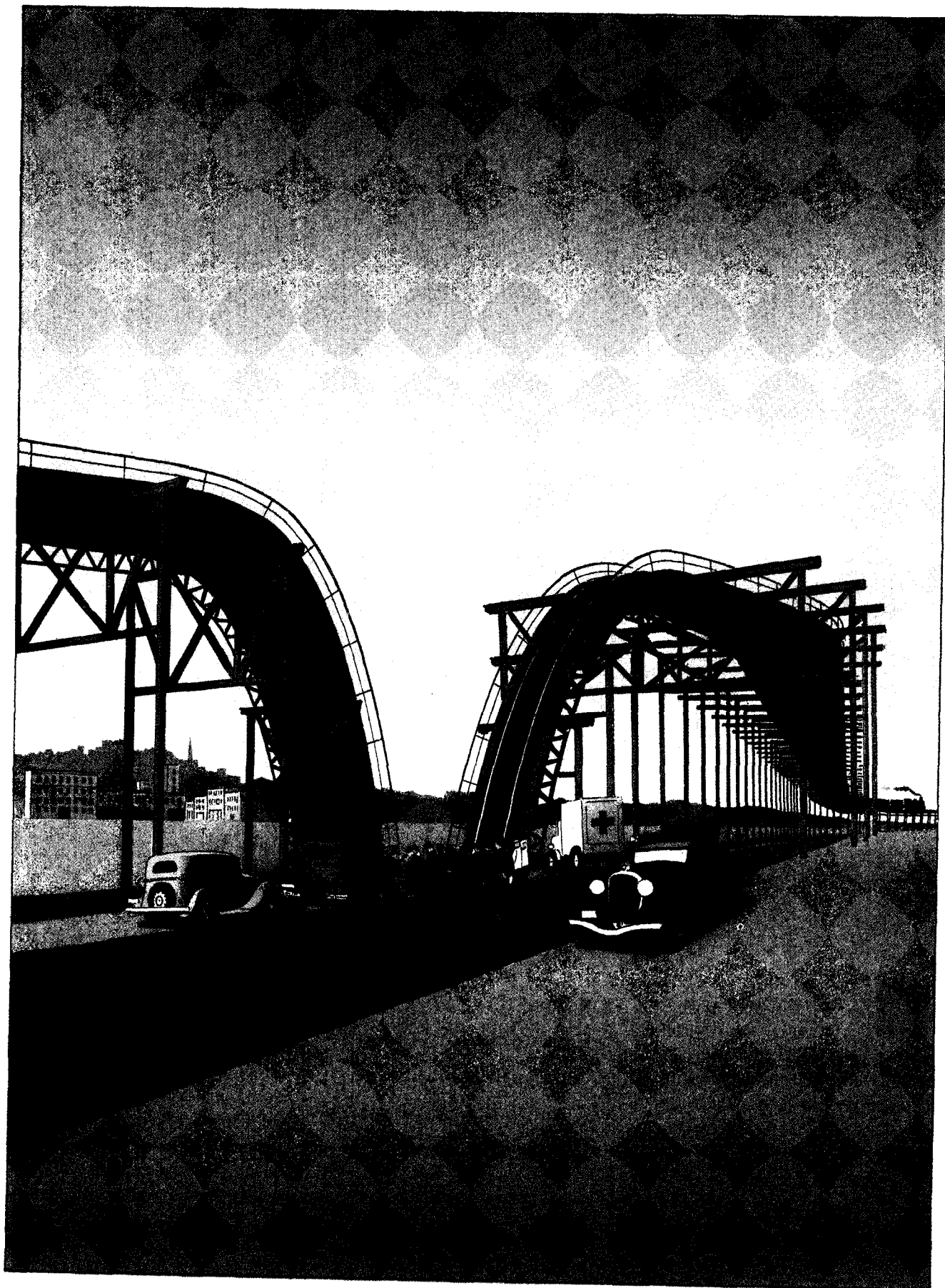
The most common consequence of the zoning status quo is that it ends up imposing fantastic unnecessary costs on top of bad development. It also wastes enormous amounts of time—and time is money. Projects are frequently sunk by delays in the process of obtaining permits. The worst consequence of the status quo is that it actually makes good development much harder to achieve than bad development.

Because many citizens have been unhappy with the model of development that zoning gives them, they have turned it into an adversarial process. They have added many layers of procedural rigmarole, so that only the most determined and wealthiest developers can withstand the ordeal. In the end, after all the zoning-board meetings and flashy presentations and environmental objections and mitigation, and after both sides' lawyers have chewed each other up and spit each other out, what ends up getting built is a terrible piece of sprawl equipment—a strip mall, a housing subdivision. Everybody is left miserable and demoralized, and the next project that comes down the road gets beaten up even more, whether it's good or bad.

No doubt many projects deserve to get beaten up and delayed, even killed. But wouldn't society benefit if we could agree on a model of good development and simplify the means of going forward with it? This is the intent of the traditional town planning that is the foundation of the new urbanism.

Human settlements are like living organisms. They must grow, and they will change. But we can decide on the nature of that growth—on the quality and the character of it—and where it ought to go. We don't have to scatter the building blocks of our civic life all over the countryside, destroying our towns and ruining farmland. We can put the shopping and the offices and the movie theaters and the library all within walking distance of one another. And we can live within walking distance of all these things. We can build our schools close to where the children live, and the school buildings don't have to look like fertilizer plants. We can insist that commercial buildings be more than one story high, and allow people to live in decent apartments over the stores. We can build Main Street and Elm Street and still park our cars. It is within our power to create places that are worthy of our affection. ☼

Drawings and diagrams are taken from James Howard Kunstler's book Home From Nowhere.





D'Accord, Baby

by HANIF KUREISHI

ALL week Bill had been looking forward to this moment. He was about to fuck the daughter of the man who had fucked his wife. Lying in her bed, he could hear Celestine humming in the bathroom as she prepared for him.

It had been a long time since he'd been in a room so cold, with no heating. After a while he ventured his arms over the covers, tore open a condom, and laid it on a cardboard box that served as a bedside table. He was about to prepare another, but didn't want to appear overopti-

**These days everyone
was a cuckold. And why
not, when marriage
was insufficient to satisfy
most human need?**

mistic. One would achieve his objective. He would clear out then. Already there had been too many delays. The waltz, for instance, though it had made him giggle. Nevertheless, he had told Madelaine, his pregnant wife, that he would be back by midnight. What could Celestine be doing in there? There wasn't even a shower; and the wind cut viciously through a broken window.

His wife had met Celestine's father, Vincent Ertel, the French ex-Maoist intellectual, in Paris. He had certainly im-

pressed her. She had talked about him continually, which was bad enough, and then rarely mentioned him, which, as he understood now, was worse.

Madelaine worked on a late-night TV discussion program. For two years she had been eager to profile Vincent's progress from revolutionary to Catholic reactionary. It was, she liked to inform Bill—using a phrase that stayed in his mind—indicative of the age. Several times she went to see Vincent in Paris; then she was invited to his country place near Auxerre. Finally she brought him to London, to record the interview. When it was done, to celebrate, she took him to Le Caprice for champagne, fish cakes, and chips.

That night Bill had put aside the script he was directing and gone to bed early with a ruler, a pencil, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. Around the time that Madelaine was becoming particularly enthusiastic about Vincent, Bill had made up his mind not only to study the great books—the densest and most intransigent, the ones from which he'd always flinched—but to underline in them, and even to memorize certain passages. The effort to concentrate was torment, as his mind flew about. Yet most nights—even during the period when Madelaine was preparing for an encounter with Vincent—he kept his light on long after she had put hers out. Determined to swallow the thickest pills of understanding, he would lie there muttering phrases he wanted to retain. One of his favorites was Emerson's "We but half express ourselves, and are ashamed of that divine idea which each of us represents."

One night Madelaine opened her eyes and said with a quizzical look, "Can't you be easier on yourself?"

Why? He wouldn't give up. He had read biology at university. Surely he couldn't be such a fool as to find these books beyond him. His need for knowledge, wisdom, nourishment, was greater than his need for sleep. How could a man have come to the middle of his life with barely a clue about who he was or where he might go? The heavy volumes represented the highest, surely, that man's thought had flown; they had to include guidance.

The close, leisurely contemplation afforded him some satisfaction—usually because the books started him thinking about other things. It was the part of the day he preferred. He slept well, usually. But on the long night of the fish cakes he awoke at four and felt for Madelaine across the bed. She wasn't there. Shivering, he walked through the house until dawn, imagining she'd crashed the car. After an hour he remembered that she hadn't taken it. Maybe she and Vincent had gone on to a late-night place. She had never done anything like this before.

He could neither sleep nor go to work. He decided to sit at the kitchen table until she returned, whenever it was. He was drinking brandy, and normally he never drank before eight in the evening. If anyone offered him a drink before this time, he claimed it was like saying good-bye to the whole day. In

the mid-eighties he'd gone to the gym in the early evening. For some days, though, good-bye was surely the most suitable word.

It was late afternoon before his wife returned, wearing the clothes she'd gone out in, looking disheveled and uncertain. She couldn't meet his eye. He asked her what she'd been doing. She said, "What do you think?" and went into the shower.

He considered several options, including punching her. But he fled the house and made it to a pub. For the first time since he'd been a student, he sat alone with nothing to do. He was expected nowhere. He had no newspaper with him, and he liked papers; he could swallow the most banal or incredible thing provided it was in newsprint. He watched the passing faces and thought how pitiless the world was if you didn't have a safe place in it.

He made himself consider how unrewarding it was to constrain people. Infidelities would occur in most relationships. These days every man or woman was a cuckold. And why not, when marriage was insufficient to satisfy most human need? Madelaine had needed something and she had taken it. How bold and stylish. How petty to blame someone for pursuing any kind of love!

He was humiliated. The feeling increased over the weeks in a strange way. At work or waiting for the tube, or having dinner with Madelaine (who had gained, he could see, a bustling, dismissive intensity of will or concentration), he found himself becoming angry with Vincent. For days on end he couldn't really think of anything else, as if the man were inhabiting him.

As he walked around Soho, where he worked, Bill entertained himself by thinking of how someone might get even with a type like Vincent, were he so inclined. The possibility was quite remote, but this didn't prevent him from imagining scenarios from which he emerged with some satisfaction, if not credit. What incentive, distraction, energy, and interest Vincent provided him with! This was almost the only creative work he got to do now.

FEW days later he was presented with Celestine. She was sitting with a man in a newly opened café, drinking cappuccino. Life was giving him a chance. It was awful. He stood in the doorway, pretending to look for someone, and considered whether he should take it.

Vincent's eldest daughter lived in London. She wanted to be an actress, and Bill had auditioned her for a commercial a couple of years earlier; he knew that she'd obtained a small part in a film directed by an acquaintance of his. On this basis he crossed the café, introduced himself, made the pleasantest conversation he could, and was invited to sit down. The man turned out to be a gay friend of hers. They all chatted. After some timorous vacillation Bill asked Celestine in a cool tone whether she'd have a drink with him in a couple of hours.

He didn't go home but walked about. When he was tired, he sat in a pub with the first volume of *Remembrance of Things Past*. He had decided that if he could read to the end of the book he would deserve a great deal of praise. He did a little underlining, which since school he had considered a sign of seriousness, but his mind wandered even more than usual until it was time to meet her.

To his delight Bill saw that some men glanced at Celestine when they could; others openly stared. When she walked to the bar, they turned to examine her legs. This would not have happened with Madelaine; only Vincent Ertel had taken an interest in her. Later, as he and Celestine strolled up the street looking for cabs, she agreed that he could come to her place at the end of the week.

It was a triumphant few days of gratification anticipated. He would do more of this. He had obviously been missing out on life's meaner pleasures. As Madelaine walked about the flat, dressing, cooking, reading, searching for her glasses, he could enjoy despising her. He informed his two closest friends that the pleasures of revenge were considerable. He liked saying that the French were used to being occupied. Now his pals were waiting to hear of his coup.

Celestine flung her keys, wrapped in a tea towel, out a window. It was a hard climb; her flat was at the top of a run-down five-story building in West Kensington, an area of itinerants, bed-sits, and students. Coming into the living room, he saw it had a view across a square. Wind and rain were sweeping into cracked windows stuffed with newspaper. The walls were yellow, the carpet brown and stained. The gas fire, which had several pairs of jeans suspended in front of it on a clotheshorse, gave off an odor, and heated parts of the room while leaving others cold.

She persuaded him to remove his overcoat but not his

scarf. Then she took him into the tiny kitchen, which had bare floorboards; between an old sink and the boiler there was hardly room for the two of them.

"I will be having us some dinner." She pointed to two shopping bags. "Do you like trout?"

"Sorry?"

It was trout. There were potatoes and green beans. After, they would have apple strudel with cream. She had been to the shops and gone to some trouble. It would take ages to prepare. He hadn't anticipated this. He left her there, saying he would fetch drink.

In the rain he went to the off-license and was paying for a bottle of wine when he noticed through the window that a taxi had stopped at the traffic lights. He ran out of the shop to hail the cab, but after he opened the door, he couldn't go through with it. He collected the wine and carried it back.

He waited in her living room, pacing and drinking. She didn't have a TV. Wintry noises battered the window. Her place reminded him of rooms he'd shared as a student. He was about to say to himself *Thank God I'll never have to live like this again* when it occurred to him that if he left Madelaine, he might, for a time, end up in some unfamiliar place, with stained, old, broken fittings. How fastidious he had become! How had it happened? What other changes had there been while he was looking in the other direction?

He noticed a curled photograph tacked to the wall; it looked as though it had been taken at the end of the sixties. Bill concluded that it was a picture of the hopeful radical who'd fucked his wife. He had been a handsome man, and with his pipe in his hand, hair below his ears, and an open-necked shirt, he had an engaging look of self-confidence and raffish pleasure. Bill recalled the slogans that had then decorated Paris: "Everything Is Possible." "Take Your Desires for Realities." "It Is Forbidden to Forbid." He'd once used them in a TV commercial. What optimism that generation had had! With his life given over to literature, ideas, conversation, writing, and political commitment, ol' Vincent must have had quite a time. He couldn't have been working constantly, like Bill and his friends.

The food was good. Bill leaned across the table to kiss Celestine. His lips brushed her cheek. She turned her head and looked out across the dark square to the lights beyond, as if trying to locate something.

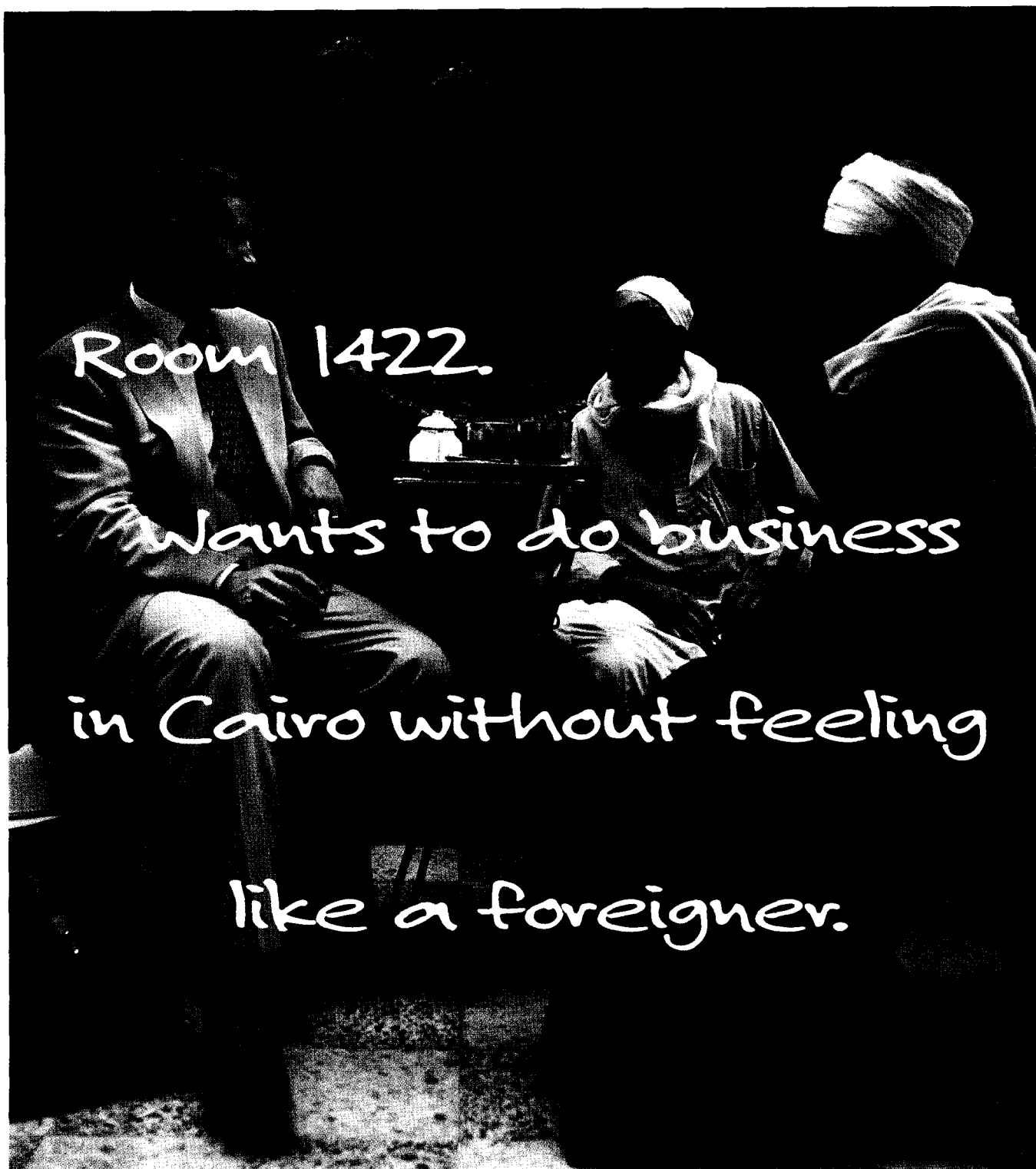
He talked about the film industry and what the actors, directors, and producers of the movies were really like. Not that he knew them personally, but they were gossiped about by other actors and technicians. She asked questions and laughed easily.

Things should have been moving along. He had to get up at 5:30 to direct a commercial for a bank. He was becoming known for such well-paid but journeyman work. Now that Madelaine was pregnant, he would have to do more of it. It

DEER

To the secret places
of the garden, deer come
eating their way through
the milky blossoms of impatiens,
the blur of azalea leaves.
How enigmatic their eyes are
and how swiftly they move.
With their soft mouths
they destroy
everything we grew.

—LINDA PASTAN



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would be a struggle to find the time for the screenwriting he wanted to do. It was dawning on him that if he was to do anything worthwhile at his age, he would have to be serious in a new way. And yet, when he considered his ambitions, which he no longer mentioned to anyone—to travel overland to Indonesia while reading Proust . . . and other, more “internal” things—he felt a surge of shame, as if it were immature and obscene to harbor such hopes; as if, in some ways, it was already too late.

He shuffled his chair around the table until he and Celestine were sitting side by side. He attempted another kiss.

She stood up and offered him her hands. “Shall we dance?”

He looked at her in surprise. “Dance?”

“It will ’ot you up. Don’t you . . . dance?”

“Not really.”

“Why?”

“Why? We always danced like this.” He shut his eyes and nodded his head as if attempting to bang in a nail with his forehead.

She kicked off her shoes. “We danced like this,” she said. “I’ll illustrate you.” She looked at him. “Take it off.”

“What?”

“This stupid thing.”

She pulled off his scarf. She shoved the chairs against the wall and put on a Chopin waltz, took his hand, and placed her other hand on his back. He looked down at her dancing feet even as he trod on them, but she didn’t object. Gently but firmly she turned and turned him across the room, until he was dizzy, her hair tickling his face. Whenever he glanced up, she was looking into his eyes. Each time they crossed the room, she trotted back, pulling him, never unamused. She seemed determined that he should learn, certain that this would benefit him.

“You require some practice,” she said at last. He fell back into his chair, blowing and laughing. “But after a week, who knows, we could get you work as a gigolo!”

IT was midnight. Celestine came naked out of the bathroom, smoking a cigarette. She got into the bed and lay beside him. He thought of a time in New York when the company had sent a white limousine to the airport. Drinking whiskey and watching TV as the limo passed over the East River toward Manhattan, he wanted nothing more than for his friends to see him.

She was on him vigorously, and the earth was moving: either that, or the two single beds, on the juncture of which he was lying, were separating. He stuck out his arms to secure them, but with each lurch his head was being forced down into the fissure. He felt as if his ears were going to be torn off. The two of them were about to crash through to the floor.

He rolled her over onto one bed. Then he sat up and

showed her what would have happened. She started to laugh; she couldn’t stop.

The gas meter ticked. She was dozing. He had never lain beside a lovelier face. He thought of what Madelaine might have sought that night with Celestine’s father—affection, attention, serious talk, honesty, distraction. Did he, Bill, give her that now? Could they give it to each other? With a kid on the way?

Celestine was nudging him and trying to say something in his ear.

“You want what?” he said. “Surely . . . no . . . no.”

“Bill, yes.”

He liked to think he was willing to try anything. A black eye would certainly send a convincing message to her father. She smiled when he raised his hand.

“I deserve to be hurt.”

“No one deserves that.”

“But you see . . . I do.”

That night, in that freezing room, he praised her beauty and her intelligence; he did everything she asked, for as long as she wanted—he had never kissed anyone for so long—until he forgot where he was, or who they both were, until there was nothing that they wanted, and only the most satisfactory peace.

He got up and dressed. He was shivering. He wanted to wash—he smelled of her—but he wasn’t prepared for a cold bath.

“Why are you leaving?” She leaped up and held him. “Stay, stay—I haven’t finished with you yet.”

He put on his coat and went into the living room. Without looking back he hurried out and down the stairs. He pulled the knob of the front door, anticipating the fresh, damp night air. But the door held. He had forgotten: the door was locked. He stood there.

Upstairs she was wrapped in a fur coat, looking down the stairwell.

“The key,” he said.

“Old man,” she said, laughing. “You are.”

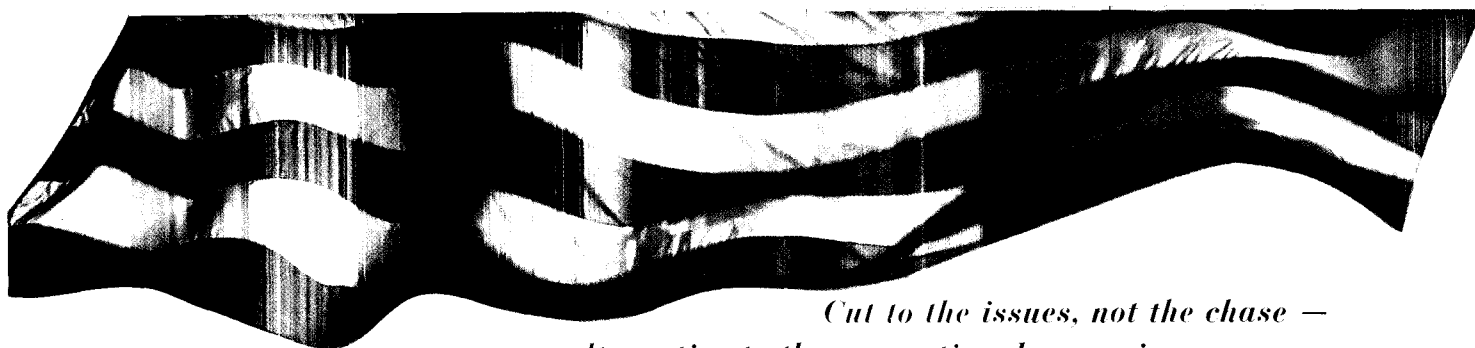
She came barefoot down the stairs. While she unlocked the door, he mumbled, “Will you tell your father I saw you?”

“But why?”

He touched her face. She drew back. “You should put something on that,” he said. “I met him once. He knows my wife.”

“I rarely see him now,” she said.

She was holding out her arms. They danced a few steps across the hall. He was better at it now. He went out into the street. Several cabs passed him, but he didn’t hail them. He kept walking. The rain was comforting. He put his head back and looked up into the sky. He had some impression that happiness was beyond him and everything was coming down, and that life could not be grasped but only lived. ☁



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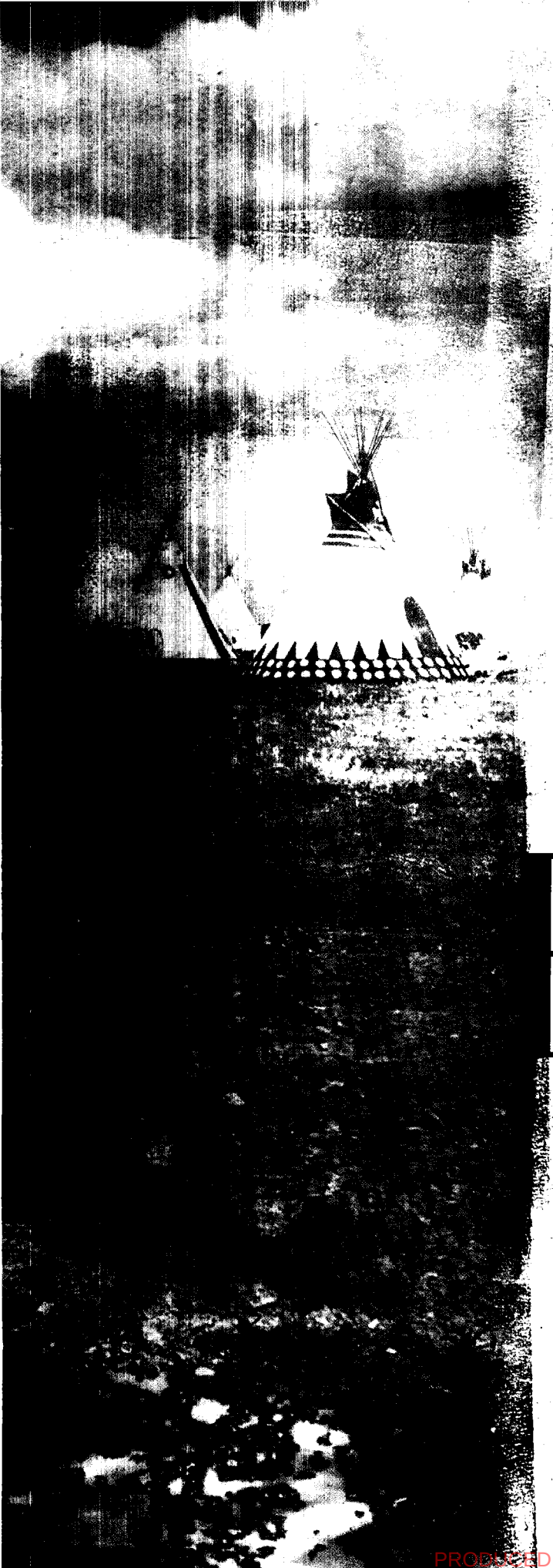
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Fort Leavenworth and the Eclipse of Nationhood

by ROBERT D. KAPLAN

*At Fort Leavenworth,
where the Army trains its top brass,
captains and colonels study high-tech
warfare, read the classics, and
ponder what will be left to defend in
a transnational world*

FIFTEEN miles beyond Kansas City the swiftly moving Missouri River—the untamed emblem of the New World—makes a wide arc before turning north. On July 2, 1804, the explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark camped nearby, en route to the Pacific. In April of 1827, during the presidency of John Quincy Adams, Colonel Henry Leavenworth sailed upriver from St. Louis and here began constructing what would become the advance post of European settlement over the western half of the North American continent. His orders were to build a fort on the east bank of the river. However, because that bank was a flood plain, he built on the bluffs of the west bank, in what was officially “Indian territory”—outside the Union. By the time the Washington bureaucrats found out, the fort was already a reality.

Fort Leavenworth is the supreme symbol of what the former Librarian of Congress Daniel J. Boorstin calls “the Fertile Verge” of American history. “A verge is a place of encounter between something and something else,” Boorstin

has written. "The long Atlantic Coast, where early colonial settlement flourished, was . . . a verge between land and sea. Every movement inward into the continent was a verge between the advanced European civilization and the stone-age culture of the American Indians, between people and wilderness." America, Boorstin went on, flourishes on the verge—of settlement, geography, culture, technology, or history.

Fort Leavenworth has guarded the frontier since 1827. As the most important fort in the West, which sent forth the first group of white people to settle in Indian country under government auspices, Leavenworth became the projection platform for Manifest Destiny. It was the main base for exploration of the Great Salt Lake, in Utah, and the Columbia River, in Oregon; near the starting point of both the Oregon and the Santa Fe Trail; a base camp for the transcontinental railroad. Here a young Illinois man, James ("Wild Bill") Hickok, first entered the West and saw a line of wagon trains as far as the eye could see. From here George Armstrong Custer and the 7th Cavalry trekked to the Little Big Horn, and troops marched off to the Mexican War. When the frontier closed, in 1890, Leavenworth began training officers for fighting overseas—another verge, which arrived in 1898 with the Spanish-American War, when American troops fought in Cuba and the Philippines. Since 1881, when General William Tecumseh Sherman established an officers' school at Fort Leavenworth, this has been the place where the Army prepares its commanders to "fight the next war." "Vinegar Joe" Stilwell, Douglas MacArthur, Dwight D. Eisenhower, and Colin Powell, to name but a few generals, were indelibly marked by Leavenworth. A Canadian major told me, "If the British Empire was won on the playing fields of Eton, then Desert Storm was won in the corridors of Fort Leavenworth."

With very few exceptions, the Army's top brass have spent at least several months of their lives—if not much longer—here. More than 90 percent of Army captains take a nine-week course at the college, and more than 50 percent of majors spend a year at Leavenworth before they are eligible for promotion to lieutenant colonel; among those majors who eventually make it to general, the percentage is much higher. Leavenworth is where military doctrine is written. Its Foreign Military Studies Office conducts in-depth analyses of foreign adversaries. When the United States intervenes overseas, the phones and computers at Leavenworth work overtime.

Leavenworth's Battle Command Training Program runs simulated war games. One such is Prairie Warrior, an annual \$7 million exercise in which computers link Leavenworth with other U.S. military installations around the world in a virtual-war situation, with isolated command headquarters, battlefield observers, and so forth. This year Prairie Warrior includes a scenario of a hypothetical island continent with great historical and cultural similarities to Europe troubled by a failing nation-state in the "north-central" sector. The nation-state is both threatened by its neighbors and tearing itself apart

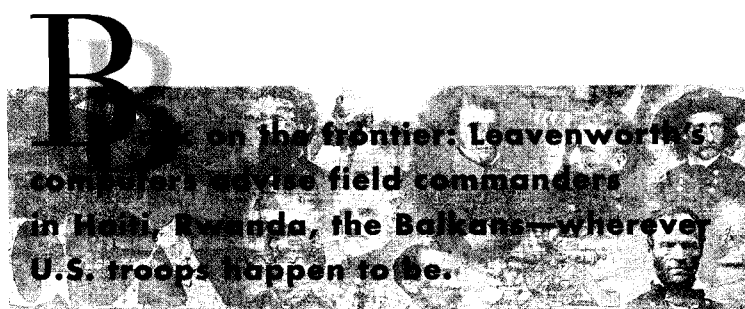


through civil unrest and guerrilla insurgencies in a densely populated urban area. Because this scenario is set fifteen years in the future (when today's captains and majors will be generals), the weaponry for the war game includes "intelligent mines" that distinguish among trucks, tanks, and people as well as identify the enemy, and Comanche helicopters (now under development) that fly over an extended distance without refueling and carry fiber-optic-guided missiles.

While other military institutions look "strategically"—and thus more abstractly—at the future, Leavenworth, because it concentrates on training captains and majors (the middle ranks), "is where the rubber meets the road," Major Chris Devens told me when I visited recently. For instance, forget Republican rhetoric about a unilateral foreign policy. Lieutenant Colonel Thomas Adams told me that in just about every circumstance that planners here have looked at—nuclear meltdowns in Eastern Europe, collapse of a central authority in sub-Saharan Africa, military offensives against drug and crime syndicates, and so on—the "intervention scenario is international"; the United States will "rarely go it alone anymore." Prairie Warrior assumes "coalition brigades" of French, British, German, and other foreign troops fighting in a "multinational environment," according to Colonel Rolly Dessert, who organizes Prairie Warrior. Of the 1,300 officers participating in Prairie Warrior this year, ninety are from seventy friendly foreign countries.

Colonel Gregory Fontenot, who was a tank commander in Operation Desert Storm, recently ran his students at Leavenworth's School of Advanced Military Studies through two scenarios: a messy and long-term peacekeeping operation in the Caucasus, in which U.S. forces cooperate with the Russian army, and the Turks refuse to let U.S. ships through the Bosphorus Straits; and a humanitarian emergency in Memphis and St. Louis, following a major earthquake along the Mississippi Valley's New Madrid fault line. A series of major quakes occurred here in 1811 and 1812. Another is expected, and buildings in Memphis were not built to withstand major earthquakes. This exercise tested the Army's ability to work with NGOs ("nongovernmental organizations," or private relief agencies), exactly as it has had to do in Rwanda and other places in the Third World.

Civil disorder after the quake was assumed. Many times in the course of my visit I heard discussion of the Posse Comitatus Act, which prevents the National Guard from acting as a local police force once it has been federalized by the



Army in a civil emergency. The implication was that turbulence within the United States might one day require repeal of the act. “The future is icky,” Lieutenant Colonel Marvin Chandler announced, showing me a picture of a cow, symbolizing the Army, trying to negotiate a series of mud puddles that represent natural catastrophes, political breakdowns, riots, and nuclear blackmail. By comparison with some of these, Bosnia appears boringly conventional.

Now that technology has bridged distances, Leavenworth is back on the frontier. Its computers disgorge advice to field commanders in Haiti, Rwanda, the Balkans, and wherever else American troops happen to be. “The guy in a tent in Port-au-Prince can access the library here regarding lessons learned in Somalia,” Major Devens told me. Every week officers from Fort Leavenworth fly to hot spots around the world. The kind of geographic considerations that led to the building of Fort Leavenworth and of the nation apply less and less. In planning for future conflicts Fort Leavenworth is helping to redefine the nation by redefining where its borders really are. For example, one captain, looking at a map of a war game in Honduras, told me, “We know more about Honduras than we knew about western Kansas during the Indian Wars. The intelligence on Honduras is *denser*. Honduras is closer in time than western Kansas was—a few hours by plane rather than days on horseback. Communications are better too.” The Third World is the new frontier.

What kind of world will it be, I began to wonder, with Honduras this close and getting closer? Could the dissolving of distances also dissolve the nation? The prairie surrounding Fort Leavenworth focuses the mind on America’s continental isolation and its debt to geography. The tensions I encountered inside the fort made me think about whether traditional nation-state America has a future in an age when oceans don’t matter.

No More Territory to Conquer

COLONEL Jerry Morelock’s walls are cluttered with U.S. military iconography: a dogged Ulysses S. Grant, the father of total, unheroic war, leaning against a tree at City Point; Robert E. Lee after Appomattox; and so on. For a computer screen saver Morelock uses a photo of Eisenhower, George Patton, Omar Bradley, and other generals tak-

en in May of 1945 in Germany, after V-E Day. Morelock, who wears wire-rimmed glasses and has slightly receding gray hair, lives with his family in “the Rookery”—the oldest house in Kansas, built in 1832. Douglas MacArthur lived there when he was on post in the early 1900s. A typical title on Morelock’s bookshelf is *Frontier Regulars: The United States Army and the Indian, 1866–1891*. He salutes the flag every afternoon at five o’clock, he told me.

We talked of recent military history. “Fifty years after V-E Day, the United States has history’s strongest military,” he said. “But it has been eroded tremendously since 1991. And that is nothing new.” Morelock pointed out that following every conflict, including the Revolutionary War (after which the 20,000-man Continental Army was disbanded and replaced by a “regiment” of 700 militiamen), military cutbacks ensued as memory faded. This was true of the periods following not just the First and Second World Wars but also the War of 1812, the Mexican War, and the Spanish-American War. “After every war everyone declared the end of war. Though now we talk about lots of smaller wars, what’s to prevent a really big conflagration? The record of history indicates that a new and great threat is certain.” The task for officers is daunting: imagine being at Leavenworth after 1898, when the United States was flush with victory following its defeat of Spain, and trying to predict Hitler at a time when the words “totalitarianism” and “fascism” were not even used.

Through most of our history we have had not only a weak central government but also a small, volunteer Army; the draft has been a phenomenon of war. The anti-war protests of the Cold War–Vietnam era were not unique. The Mexican War caused dramatic protests whose pacifist rhetoric could easily be mistaken for that of sixties demonstrations. (The poet Robert Lowell opposed the Vietnam War just as his great-great-uncle, James Russell Lowell, a founder of *The Atlantic Monthly*, opposed the Mexican War.) Even though conscription did not begin until halfway through the Civil War, it sparked riots in New York. The United States, in fact, did not have an adequate standing army until the twentieth century. The Cold War strengthened nation-statism, as typified by a military draft through 1973; its end brought the United States back to its roots as a weakly governed, brawling, fractious society.

Even if U.S. society seems less divided today than in the nineteenth century, two oceans will no longer seal us off

from disintegrative forces elsewhere. As nation-states begin the slow, inexorable process of melting into a transnational muck, the U.S. Army must maneuver to help the American nation preserve some semblance of a continental identity. Colonel Morelock worries whether it can succeed.

"Just like at the end of the Indian Wars, in 1890, the Army finds it has no more territory left to conquer," Morelock said. "The answer a hundred years ago was imperialism" in the Philippines, which, however misguided, kept the Army primed to save Europe in both world wars. (In 1935, while the United States was still in an isolationist mood, Eisenhower honed his analytical skills by helping to reorganize the Filipino army.) "For now, we're the world's nine-one-one force. The public screams, *Stop those images*—the ones on TV of kids starving. But that's not necessarily a national interest."

Responding to emergencies is a vocation, though, a temporary *raison d'être* until the real threat appears—nuclear war with a renegade Third World state, a rebellion at home, whatever. But even that might not save the "traditional" Army, and what it represents to the nation, because of the way war itself is changing.

A Professional Caste

THE acceleration of technology is driving a wedge between military and civilian societies and bringing about, for the first time, a professional-caste elite. Thus today's volunteer Army is different from all others in our history. Soldiers are becoming like doctors and lawyers—another professional group we'd like to need less of but upon which we rely more. And just as health reform requires the consent of the medical community, because doctors own a complex body of knowledge, foreign policy will over the decades be increasingly influenced by the military, because war, peacekeeping, famine relief, and the like are becoming too complex for civilian managers.

The most troubling break with the past is how abstract and technological war is becoming. A dictum I heard at Leavenworth was "Attrition of the same adds up to big change." Colonel Thomas Suitt, who runs a command-preparation course, showed me how information-age war will demand leaders—from lieutenants to Presidents—who can work their way through dense waves of data to make risky decisions rapidly and constantly. Suitt's course simulates tank battles for lieutenant colonels who will have 300–400 vehicles and 5,000 soldiers to lead against similar forces in a "combat window" where all will be decided in fifteen to thirty minutes. "Each of these engagements is bigger and faster than Waterloo," Colonel Suitt explained. "Commanding an armored brigade isn't brain surgery—it's tougher." In the days when tank commanders saw only the narrow view from their own tanks, decisions, though often flawed and fatal,

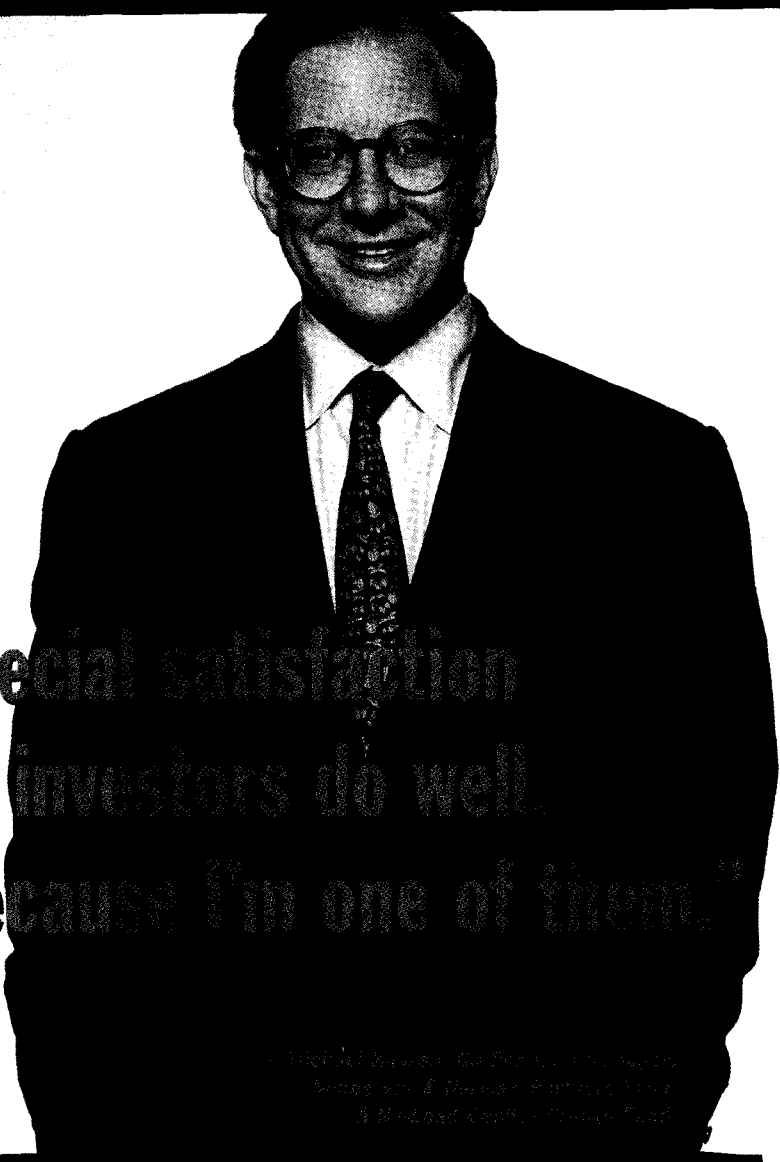
were easier to make, because there was less information to process. Now the commander in an M1A2 tank has the electronic capability to map terrain over the horizon and to know the amount of fuel and ammunition left in each of his hundreds of vehicles, the speed and timing of Apache support helicopters above, the location of each "dead zone" (an area between friendly vehicles which none of his tank drivers can see), what wind and temperature patterns will affect how visibility will be obscured by the smoke from exploding shells, and so on. As Suitt ran me through the onscreen battle, displaying all the vehicles and the terrain as combat progressed and asking me what I would do at each stage, I felt as if I were playing multidimensional chess with thirty seconds allowed between moves. More and more information has to be processed with less and less time to reflect.

Suitt's course is but a taste of what goes on at Leavenworth. Here the term "computer-literate" is meaningless, because one must be computer-sophisticated to function. I thought for a moment about the implications of what he was teaching, drawing on my experience with other branches of the U.S. government in Washington and overseas.

Military influence is growing not only in absolute terms, through the military's command of complex technologies, but also in relative terms, because of cutbacks in other sectors of the foreign-policy bureaucracy. The technological revolution that has increased the military's clout in Washington has decreased the State Department's: advances in global communications deprive diplomats of privileged first-hand knowledge, and businesspeople, with their own growing array of resources, require less help from embassies. In fact, embassies may not survive beyond a few more decades. As a modern institution, the embassy came into being in the mid sixteenth century, in the aftermath of a shipbuilding revolution that brought distant places within reach, and it flourished through the modern era of nation-states. But in an age of weakened state authority embassy links between one state and another will be less important.

The inclusion of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in high policy sessions, coupled with reductions in the Foreign Service (the State Department's diplomatic core), is thus impelled by historical undercurrents far deeper than the Republican victory in 1994. The military, in all but a technical sense, is no longer ordered anywhere. It is a self-interested bureaucracy with the power of negotiation. The United States didn't go into Bosnia in the early 1990s primarily because the military was reluctant.

Another advantage the military has over the State Department is a disciplined and highly vertical command structure. This limits destabilizing horizontal ambitions more than do civilian bureaucracies, in which, with fewer great causes to struggle for, personal ambition finds fewer legitimate outlets. For example, in an age of two-career couples State is awash with complaints and maneuvering over foreign as-



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HHigh-ranking Army officers will
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be declining in the Foreign Service
and that the media largely lack.

signments. There is much less of this in the military, partly because it is less democratic and partly because its culture is more old-fashioned, with the phenomenon of two-career couples less advanced.

Despite perennial bashing by the media, the Central Intelligence Agency may, just like the military, become increasingly influential in the future, perhaps also at the expense of the State Department. Again, technology will be a factor, because the agency has access to an ever-greater range of electronically obtained information that necessitates human analysis. Moreover, a fractured, borderless world full of illicit drugs, plutonium smugglers, and organized crime will require a greater quantity of human intelligence to preserve security against eroding physical borders. "A nuclear detonation in the atmosphere that is not a test is probable in the next ten to fifteen years," Roger Spiller, the George C. Marshall Professor of Military History at Leavenworth, told me, "if only because groups, as well as rogue states, will be acquiring the technology without also acquiring the diplomatic skills and bureaucratic control mechanisms for keeping a nuke without miscalculating." The best way to keep nuclear weapons out of the hands of the wrong people is human penetration: spies will in effect become border guards. Liberals, then, face another defeat: the very institutions they loathe are precisely the ones that will become more powerful—the military and the CIA.

The professional-caste quality of the Army emerges in many ways. The growing use of technical jargon and acronyms at Leavenworth to accompany the growth of technology and military specialties has created an insiders' patois all but incomprehensible to the uninitiated. Foreign territory is referred to as OCONUS ("outside the continental United States"), humanitarian and peacekeeping duties are called OOTW ("operations other than war," pronounced *ootwa*), the post library is CARL ("combined arms research library"), the technological revolution in the military is the RMA ("revolution in military affairs"), and so on. Also significant is the level of scholarship. At Leavenworth men and women in their late twenties through early forties devour ancient history and related subjects.

Robert Epstein, a military historian, followed me out of his office, lecturing me. "Ancient history has everything. There is nothing that can ever happen that won't have an echo from the classical past." He explained how the immigration of German tribes led to tensions with the native Ro-

mans and abetted the breakup of the Roman world. A subgroup of Germans, the Visigoths, fled into the empire in the late fourth century A.D. to escape other barbarian tribes. Not satisfied with how the Romans treated them, the Visigoths eventually rose against the very state that had given them refuge. Filling much of the vacuum created as the imperium disintegrated was Christianity—a radical and intolerant counterpart to dignified, aristocratic paganism. The early Christians, Epstein went on, won the debate over values partly by choking the debate off—the Christians were able successfully to characterize the other side's arguments as immoral, or incorrect. Thus intimidation kept people from saying what they really thought.

The eclectic reading at Leavenworth includes military writers such as Antoine Henri Jomini, Karl von Clausewitz, and Frederick the Great. Because many officers are late bloomers intellectually, they attack books with an urgency unknown on an Ivy League campus. During the Cold War the Foreign Service fancied itself the elite government bureaucracy. The military may yet claim that mantle for the new age. Army captains and majors, to say nothing of the higher ranks, evince a historical sensibility that could be declining in the Foreign Service and that the media, with notable exceptions, lack. "The electronic media," one major sneers, are "about *now, now, now*, with all the depth of a credit card." To mention Haiti here is to elicit a detailed report on that country's troubles since independence from France, in 1804. Mention Rwanda and you hear about ethnic violence from the late 1950s through the 1970s. The same with the Balkans. Whenever, in the course of various lectures I delivered here, I brought up the possibility of U.S. military intervention in Bosnia, my own writings (and those of others) about that region's fractious history were thrown back at me. Here historical precedent rules. Officers study previous battles and interventions, and the political circumstances surrounding them, the way law students study torts. The underlying message is that knowledge of the past helps foresight, and those with foresight accrue power.

If the future holds smaller wars with less meaning for the rest of us, this will widen the gap between the military and society. Neither we nor the military want this to happen. But the current era is driven by an unprecedented accumulation of knowledge, which encourages the division of society into subgroups with their own journals, social networks, and obsessions. These subgroups are like lonely travelers who



bump into other travelers—other subgroups—in superficial encounters. Why should the military be any different? Officers at Leavenworth read *The Economist* and *Foreign Affairs*, and watch the *The NewsHour With Jim Lehrer*, but that doesn't mean they interpret the information the way civilian policymakers and people in the media do. However sophisticated the reading lists, many of the people doing the reading here come from rural, blue-collar America. As soldiers, they live in materially poor conditions, especially compared with people who spend their lives in the affluent Washington suburbs. The fact that so many military bases are, like Leavenworth, in the Midwest or the South further isolates them from the sensibilities of coastal metropolitan elites. "It matters less what you read than where you live and where you come from, because that determines how you interpret what you read," Major Susan P. Kellett-Forsyth, one of the first female graduates of West Point, told me.

A New Manifest Destiny

JUST as the military is separating from society and civilian government, it is also separating from the media—which might influence it most of all. Inside a nondescript one-story building near the post cemetery Colonel Theodore Milton Jr., a fluent Russian-speaker who once commanded an infantry battalion in Berlin, was talking on the phone about an upcoming conference in Moscow about the problem of organized crime. When I arrived, he called in a group of majors and civilian researchers who spoke to me of "gray-area" (nonconventional) threats such as diseases, floods, and computer networks (the Zapatistas, in Chiapas, raise money in the United States through the Internet, I was told). The media were also considered to be a potential threat. "Yeah, the media could gray out on us," one major muttered offhandedly. He was not alone in this view.

Journalists and soldiers have been at odds for a long time. The media's effect on policy is not new either. The newspaper baron William Randolph Hearst, encouraging the artist Frederic Remington to champion Cuba's struggle for independence from Spain, said, "You furnish the pictures, and I'll furnish the war." The Spanish-American War soon followed. What has changed is scale. The media are now electronic and worldwide, and, as we are repeatedly told, they cover warfare in real time. Like the military's, the media's power in Washington and elsewhere has grown at the ex-

pense of civilian government's, only much more so. "What do you hate most about the Pentagon?" I asked a number of officers at Leavenworth. Time and again the reply came, "Talking to a general who's not listening to you because he's looking over your shoulder at CNN, worried about what conflict [the war correspondent] Christiane Amanpour might drag us into." Army officers and war correspondents may all be students of Balkan and Persian Gulf conflict, but even if their information is similar, their goals are different.

Whereas soldiers often come from small, parochial communities to discover a nation, foreign correspondents more often come from cosmopolitan backgrounds to discover the wider world. "The military," Major Kellett-Forsyth told me, "is in the nation-state world. The media represents the post-modern, or transnational world. Overseas, [U.S. soldiers] sit down with each other. The American media sits down with foreign journalists: that's its socialization group."

And, of course, the American media are becoming less American, as Britons and others infiltrate their ranks. CNN epitomizes an emerging electronic life-form that is slowly becoming the eyes and ears of the world community. Members of the media, particularly foreign correspondents, are becoming what Mitchell Cohen, an editor at *Dissent*, calls "rooted cosmopolitans"—people with several loyalties, standing "in many circles, but with common ground" in the form of a home base. Cohen's description evokes the turn-of-the-century essayist Randolph Bourne's idea of a transnational America—of multiple-passport holders and dual citizens.

A new Manifest Destiny, in other words: We strip the world of its human ingenuity, attracting the most talented Asians, Africans, and so on to the United States. We anglicize them. Although they are not loyal to the degree that former immigrants were, they accept America as their base. We become the place where all the world's major cultures and economies meet, conquering the world as it conquers us. Blood-and-soil nationalism recedes.

Given that American politics has often been a series of peaceful evolutions, we may be in the midst of a transition so gradual that it cannot fit within the confines of the news. It will be apparent only after it happens. Tom Nairn, a social scientist, writes that nationalism is "an inwardly-determined social necessity, a 'growth-stage,' located somewhere in between . . . 'feudal societies' and a future where the factors of nationality will become less prominent." America, more than any other nation, may have been born to die.

The media could be ahead of this curve, the Army behind it, as the modern world of sharply defined nation-states dies an excruciatingly slow death. Whereas the media lead us into the transnational world, the Army fights back and adapts. "The parameters of what the American military can do have narrowed because of the media," Colonel Morelock told me. Karen Wilhelm, an Air Force officer (a number of officers from the other services attend courses here), said,

"The media sets too high a standard. If a few soldiers are killed or wounded, the media judges the whole operation a failure. Because of the media, the only conflicts we'll be able to enter are those we can win easily." Another officer lamented, "We can't fight the Serbs the way we fought the Indians—we're too restricted now."

Might this be blaming the media for what has come to be referred to as the Powell doctrine? As Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell delineated a policy of intervening only where victory seemed certain, and certain to be

quick. Thus we fought in the Persian Gulf and fed the starving for a while in Somalia, but did virtually nothing to stop a war that threatens to undermine the stability of post-Communist Europe—a war in which a million people were driven from their homes and as many as 200,000 killed in situations that resembled the Nazi Holocaust. Or did Powell, through his experience in Vietnam, merely divine what would be tolerated by a public informed of every mistake and gory detail of war?

Nationhood is nourished by blood and strife, risk and deep meaning—not by ease of operation. Ease of operation in a media-dominated age represents a military interest more than a national one, indicative of the military's increased power as a technocratic caste. Under a government of technocrats, the Mexican Nobel laureate Octavio Paz has written, "society would progress with greater efficiency but without aim." The Powell doctrine, by swerving so hard to avoid future Vietnams, also avoids the great, meaningful—and, of course, risky—actions that might restore old-fashioned national identity. The Powell doctrine mirrors the narrowing parameters set by the media. Complaining about the media may thus be, in the words of one person at Leavenworth, just another sign of "cultural despair."

The Core of Nationhood

EAST Coast monuments like the Lincoln Memorial and the Statue of Liberty speak specifically to ideals. Fort Leavenworth, built where the prairie meets the Great Plains, invokes blood and soil. Notice how the British historian John Keegan, in *Six Armies in Normandy*, sets the scene for the American roots of D-Day. Leavenworth, he writes, is

one of the most sacred places of the army's emotional geography, holier than Battle Monument at West Point or the eternal flame at Arlington National Cemetery, where . . . on the bluff above the Missouri still scarred by the abandoned Oregon-Santa Fé trail, stands the tiny memorial chapel of the regiments which fought for the frontier in the Indian wars. . . . It is there in the low-eaved gloom, between the cannon barrels which serve as pillars to the roof, among the slips of commemorative marble to scalped subalterns, that the American officer reminds himself of the days of 'real soldiering'; days when men . . . rode all day to the musical creak of the McClellan saddle. . . . It is the shrine of those Indian-fighting troopers whom Frederick Remington has immortalized in paint for the American nation.

One day I stood inside the darkened holy of holies that Keegan describes, and felt as if I were inside the core of nationhood. The memorial chapel was built of local limestone in 1878, two years after the massacre of Custer's soldiers. Six brass howitzers from the Indian wars are embedded in the wall. In addition to plaques commemorating the Army

CENTRAL AND MAIN

The little old woman
(she is just that),
whose skin is pale,
yellow from lack
of love, of sun
(from age, in short),
who's wrapped in plaid
her mother wore,
has crossed the street
to the library's door.

She brings back *The Pearl*
(pleasure for princes!),
which her sister translated
decades ago,
but also has under
her elbow the news-
letter of the Ladies
of The Blessed Trinity.
She knows how death
has brought two
to their knees today
and knows, without
an allegory,
what comfort, little,
can be given.

The other woman
who has crossed at the same
time is alert
to other signals.
Her lips are the color
of plum flesh,
her skirt the gauze

of moth wings,
her blouse shines
and through it the supple
swing of her breasts
makes red rise up
the throat of Mr.
Wilson, at the corner,
who also crosses,
who also dreams,
who loses his purpose
near the Bon Marché.

Now bright cars mosey
through the intersection,
of Central and Main,
having stopped for him,
for her, and even
for the old woman.
The fall air
is bracing, the sun
is full gold,
yet each one knows,
somehow, what's blowing,
brewing, coming.
O life, says each—
three spirits receptive
as Marconi's first
continent-kissing waves—
O life,
let it be *me*
who's here forever!

—CHRISTOPHER JANE
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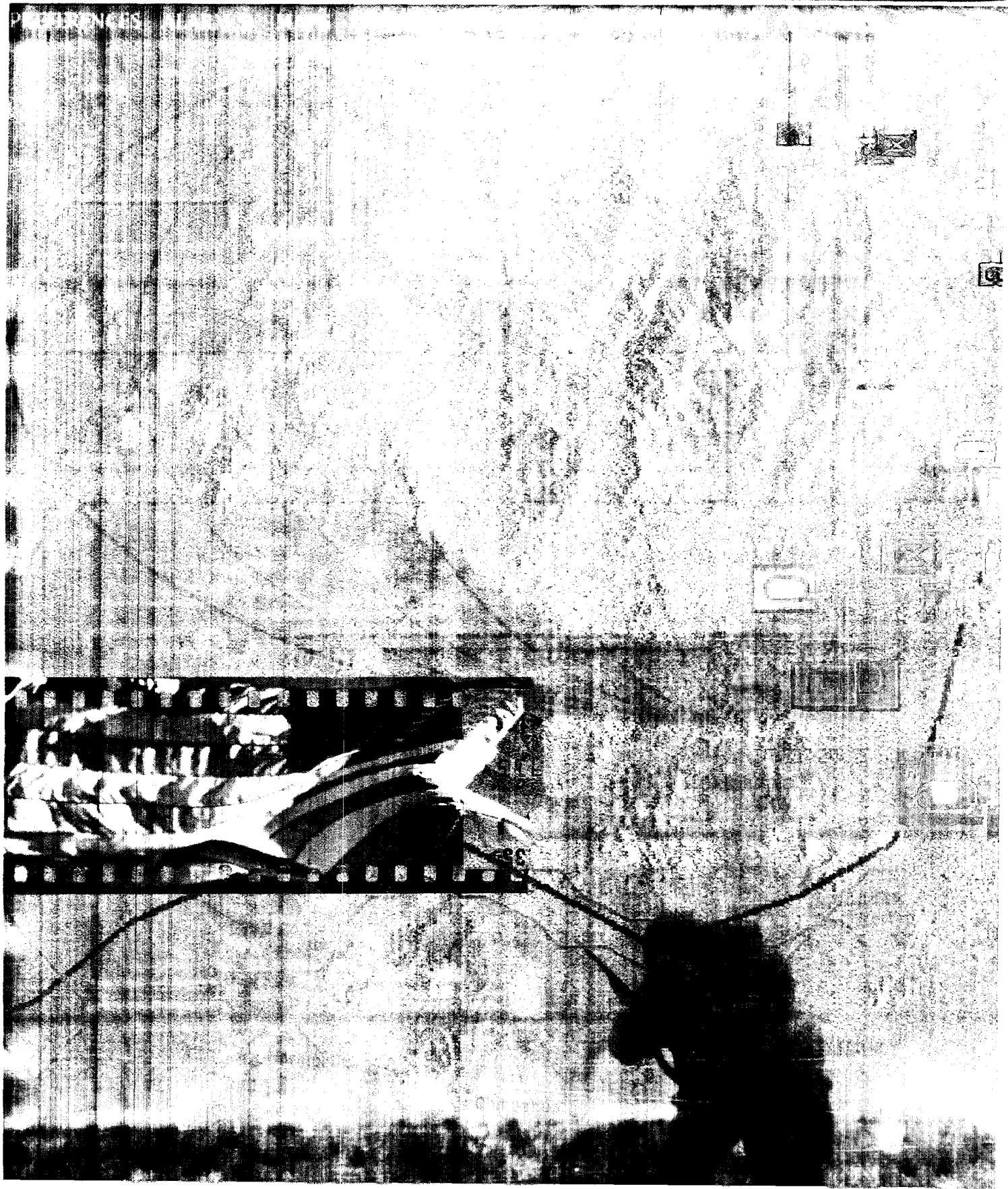
and helped conserve natural resources. And that left another little corner of the world all alone. At Phillips, that's what it means to be The Performance Company.

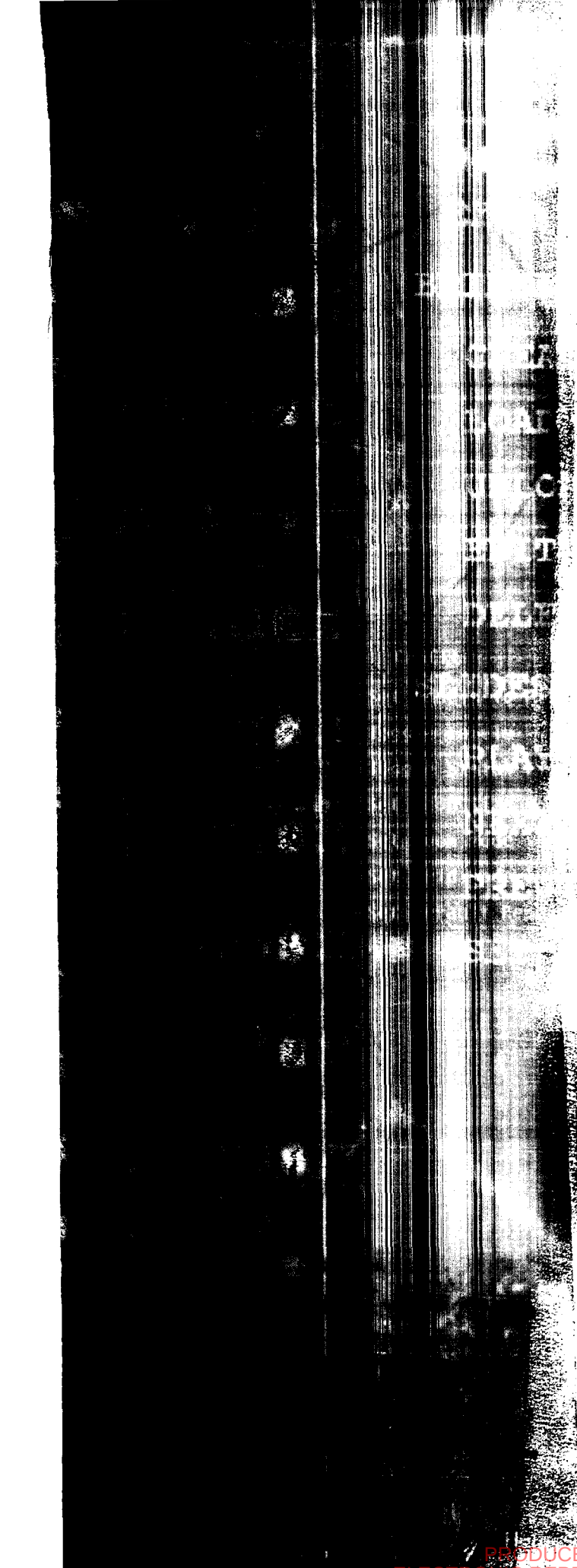
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dead at Little Big Horn and other frontier engagements, the walls are studded with the names of heroes of every war since, among them Colonel Ollie Reed (July 30, 1944) and First Lieutenant Ollie Reed Jr. (July 5, 1944)—father and son killed weeks apart in France and Italy in the Second World War.

Outside, the sunlight burned off the late-morning mist. As much as it is an Army base, or a war college, Fort Leavenworth is a living museum. Late-eighteenth-century French cannons, from the days before President Thomas Jefferson bought the Louisiana Territory from France, look out over the Missouri River. Lining the parade ground are red-brick Victorian houses with white-frame porticoes. Custer lived in one, MacArthur in another. In nearby Otis Hall, in 1926, when Fort Leavenworth was already a hundred years old, Eisenhower lived with his family. Leavenworth is where Ike learned to play golf. In another brick building, in the winter of 1917–1918, a young officer, F. Scott Fitzgerald, wrote the first draft of his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. President Abraham Lincoln designated the post cemetery one of the first twelve national military cemeteries. It holds the graves of more than 19,000 soldiers who served from the War of 1812 through Desert Storm, including those of Shango Hango, an Indian soldier; four officers from Little Big Horn; and a casualty from Fort Sumter. Fifteen hundred of the graves are unmarked.

The *pièce de résistance* is the Buffalo Soldier Monument, a sixteen-foot-high bronze statue of a black trooper mounted on his horse, rearing up before two reflecting pools. The “buffalo soldiers” were two African-American regiments, the 9th and 10th Cavalries, who from the end of the Civil War through the closing of the western frontier escorted cattle drives and wagon trains, installed telegraph lines, and fought Native Americans and Mexican revolutionaries. The monument was dedicated in 1992. The idea for it originated with Colin Powell when he was deputy commander here, in 1981–1982. The bronze horse and rider have a baroque magnificence, as though leaping out of a Remington oil painting. Families and other small groups stroll by it reverentially, and they may be white or black—in contrast to Gettysburg, Williamsburg, and Monticello, where visitors are overwhelmingly white. It is a binding icon, new and necessary.

Inside the post buildings the theatricality demanded by tradition deepens. The pictures lining the corridors range from the Revolutionary War general Nathanael Greene to Douglas MacArthur striding ashore in the Philippines in 1944. In a varnished-wood boardroom with a plush red carpet officers dressed in black boots and battle fatigues discuss future war scenarios in the Balkans, Central America, and Africa. Dress greens or jacket and tie are worn at the other war colleges. But Leavenworth is a frontier post still. A nostalgic view of the United States is deliberately cultivated

here. What Tom Nairn calls “the modern Janus” certainly applies to Leavenworth. Recalling the “Roman god, Janus, who stood above gateways with one face looking forward and one backwards,” Nairn writes, “Thus does nationalism stand over the passage to modernity. . . . As human kind is forced through its strait doorway, it must look desperately back into the past, to gather strength wherever it can be found for the ordeal of ‘development.’”

Global Reconstruction?

WHEREAS the public, particularly the liberal public that watches public television, harks back to the Civil War and the Second World War, when slavery and fascism were the enemies, the Army’s defining moment, as I repeatedly heard at Leavenworth, was fighting the “Indians.” The very location of Army bases in the heartland is a legacy of the Indian wars. Not only Fort Leavenworth but also other bases, such as Fort Riley and Fort Hays, in Kansas, and Fort Sill, in Oklahoma, were originally frontier posts. A popular book here is *Five Years a Dragoon*, by Percival G. Lowe, a nostalgic memoir of Indian operations on the Great Plains between the Mexican and Civil Wars and of “the bivouac under the blue sky.” “The Indian plains beyond Fort Riley have been replicated in all the wars we’ve fought since: World War Two, Desert Storm, Somalia,” Jerry Morelock explained to me. “In our minds we’re still the cavalry. But that will end. We’re not at the full *tech-war* stage yet, but we will be. All indications, demographic and otherwise, are that the future of war is urban. Patriotism, tied to a romantic vision of the land, will be harder to sustain.”

The possibility notwithstanding of another great war in coming decades, the near term, according to what people here told me, offers the uninspiring and clinical vision of small, increasingly urban wars and rescue details that will have less and less meaning for the nation. “In the future the shelf life of victory will be short,” said Roger Spiller, the military-history professor. “Military operations will proliferate but mean less.” Like lower economic-growth rates, these smaller deployments will represent a departure from our history, which through the Second World War was driven by a major war every few decades. (If anyone believes that major wars have not been crucial for our nationhood, consider how few patriotic songs and national holidays we would have without them. True, we might be happier from now on without great military struggles—but whatever we will have become will not be a nation in the traditional sense.)

New restrictions on warfare have resulted in a greater emphasis on “operations other than war”: humanitarian assistance, peacekeeping, hurricane and disaster relief, counter-drug operations, and so on. The Army has throughout its history been involved in such efforts—the Tennessee Valley

project in the 1930s, for instance, and the campaign to eradicate yellow fever in the Panama Canal Zone at the beginning of the twentieth century. But, again, the scale has changed. The percentage of people in combat units is lower than ever: fewer than 10 percent of the troops take 95 percent of the casualties. The tendencies toward noncombat activities and technology-driven professionalization feed on each other. There may be no way out. Soldiers will become “security providers.” Though many civilians feel more comfortable with an Army that engages in humanitarian relief, people still join the Army, as Colonel Morelock told me, “to fight, to be soldiers.” This disparity increases their sense of frustration and, occasionally, despair. One major said, “Others can provide hurricane relief, but who’s going to be trained to kill when the next big one comes?”

Perhaps the best use of the Army that can be hoped for is what Jim Schneider, a professor of military theory at Leavenworth, calls “global reconstruction.” The post-Civil War South is its paradigm. As we inherited the problems of the South after the Civil War, we inherited the problems of the world after the Cold War. We hunt down bad guys (terrorists, drug lords) over a devastated world landscape the way the Army hunted down the early brigades of the Ku Klux Klan in the 1870s. We succeeded in absorbing the South into an industrialized America in the twentieth century; we may, of course, fail to absorb Russia and other places into the post-industrialized West in the twenty-first. But we will have had our moments of glory now and again, sufficient to create useful service myths and sharpen a blurring national identity. The Second World War mystique of the 10th Mountain Division, for example, is being amplified by post-Cold War relief operations.

Because, as I kept hearing, “the intervention scenario is international,” we will eventually lead an “international constabulary” for these punitive expeditions. This constabulary might begin with the United States, Great Britain, and France—as the European Union began with a Franco-German coal-and-steel community. Republicans need not worry; if this constabulary uses the mantle of the United Nations, it will do so merely as an afterthought and a diplomatic contrivance. Leavenworth has a long history of training foreign officers from allied armies. American officers here regularly and enthusiastically discuss operations with their counterparts from Britain, Canada, Turkey, Chile, and so on. What the American officers have no tradition—or use—for is running operations through an international civilian bureaucracy like the UN. “If we have to fight in Bosnia, we’ll fight,” one colonel told me. “I just don’t want some Boutros-Boutros bureaucrat telling us we can hit that outpost but not the other one.” (Indeed, the military has written the rules for our current Balkan policy: where troops are deployed, it has wide freedom to act, even if the mission itself is very limited.)



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Last Redoubt of the Nation-State?

GLOBAL reconstruction, or something like it, is more a description—and a rationalization—of what we are already halfheartedly doing than a cause behind which Americans will ever rally. Many parts of the world cannot be saved, and the voters instinctively know it. We may have run out of foreign causes that can buttress our own nationhood. Fighting faceless plutonium smugglers, high birth rates in Africa, and tropical-disease pandemics, although clearly worthwhile, will not engender drum-beating patriotism the way fighting Hitler did. Sure, there are always domestic causes to rally the nation—but for the most part they are best handled as sudden crises. A protracted deterioration involving crime, family life, class divisions, and so on is hard to halt, and easy to deny.

It was with such lugubrious thoughts that I listened to a number of round-table discussions at Leavenworth. In one a group of majors lamented the end of the draft. "People who want the draft back are hankering after a lost golden age," Major Robert Everson said. "The draft is obsolete because of the way warfare is changing. War has become so technological that it takes too long to train people who will only serve for a year or two." The talk switched to Oklahoma City. A Marine in the group, Major Craig Tucker, said, "The minute I heard about Oklahoma City, I knew who did it—rednecks, the kind of guys from southern Idaho." I had heard similar remarks. The finger-pointing at Middle Eastern Muslims immediately after the blast, while predictable on the basis of past events, reflected a coastal preoccupation with foreign policy and also an ignorance of social upheavals in the heartland, for which people in the military, quite a number of whom are from blue-collar backgrounds, have antennae. Tucker and another officer suggested that "a time may come when the military will have to go domestic"—as when George Washington put down the Whiskey Rebellion in western Pennsylvania, in 1794. During another discussion a visiting Canadian officer said, "The biggest threat to Canada is the United States collapsing on itself. Canada's problems are out in the open, but the degree of turmoil in the United States is not admitted." Canadians have always sneered at the "disorderly" United States; I noticed that protests from the American officers were muted.

These discussions were remarkable for their intensity. Quotations from books, pointed aphorisms, and Latin phrases came at me like machine-gun fire. "The Athenian oracle said the Persians would be defeated by 'wooden walls,' which meant the Athenian navy. That's the kind of riddle we have to solve." "Remember Heisenberg's rule: one who engages in foresight alters the future by the choices he makes." Because this physical and intellectual elite is rather poorly paid and lives in Spartan conditions, there is something monastic about it: it is a last redoubt of the nation-state at which the transna-



tional world can gawk. Here national life is lived and nurtured with new sustaining myths, like that of the buffalo soldiers.

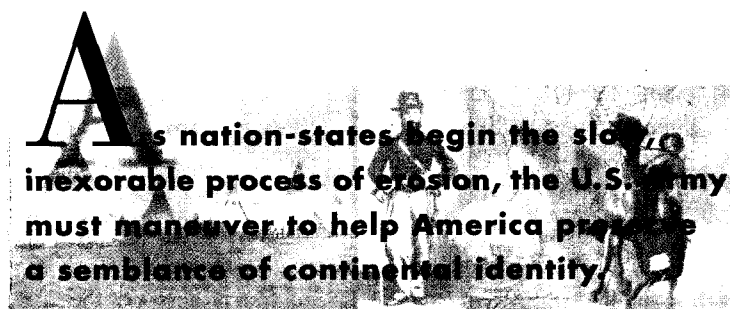
Nothing lasts forever. We might have gone on becoming more meanly and divisively nationalistic, urged on by those like Father Coughlin, had Hitler and Tojo not saved us. Officers at Leavenworth have been clairvoyant in the past—training for overseas operations before the Spanish-American War and the First World War. The talk of nuclear explosions, urban warfare, and civil disorder at home raises the question What will the future map of our continent look like?

I wondered if this map might one day look like the map of Europe after Rome fell. A hundred years before its fall Rome was a world power, defended by a mighty military. Growing ethnic diversity—a strength for so long—eventually helped to undermine Rome. As it entered its final century, the empire was a place of decaying cities, a threatened middle class, terrorists, and lawyers who paralyzed government through unending legal challenges. The classicist Michael Grant wrote in *The Fall of the Roman Empire* that the configurations of settlement of the Visigoths and other immigrant minorities within the Roman Empire "formed an important part of the process by which the ancient world gradually developed the new national patterns characteristic of the Middle Ages." From one undivided polity came many smaller ones.

Inverting Geography

TO many of us, geography means a grade-school social-studies course, or perhaps a "triptik" published by the American Automobile Association. The study of geography as a serious discipline has declined in recent decades. But geography is nothing less than the social, environmental, and political implications of humanity's interaction with the landscape. (The rise of political science at geography's expense shows how unreal and abstract the study of nations and international politics has become.) As officers at Fort Leavenworth who deal with Honduran insurgencies and Russian organized crime know, distances are collapsing. But that doesn't mean that geography will cease to matter. Geography could become our enemy—the means by which Asia and Europe overtake us in world importance, through the collapse of certain distances and the conceptual lengthening of others. I will explain.

Daniel Boorstin and Aldous Huxley observed that whereas Europe is a land with far too much history and not enough ge-



ography, America has little history and plenty of geography. This idea complements Bernard DeVoto's point in *The Course of Empire* that no continent has been so perfectly appointed to nation-building as North America. The Appalachians provided a western boundary for a nascent community of states through the end of the eighteenth century, and river valleys like the Mohawk and the Ohio later allowed for western penetration by settlers. Beyond the Appalachians the settlers found a flat panel of rich farmland without geographical impediments where, in the nineteenth century, human differences could be ground down to a distinctive American culture. By the time westering pioneers reached a truly daunting barrier—the deserts to both the east and the west of the Rocky Mountains—technology had advanced to the level of the transcontinental railroad. America was thus founded in a state of nature. Our self-government, Frederick Jackson Turner, Boorstin, and others remind us, evolved not from ideology, as in Europe, but from the early settlers' encounters with the landscape.

Though the frontier closed a hundred years ago, as Turner said, the ocean and its vast size mattered for decades afterward. Until recently oceans secured for us a large internal market and protected America from the physical devastation of the Second World War, allowing for the climax of the American Century in the late 1940s and the 1950s. (Americans, unlike most Asians and Europeans, have not seen a major sustained war on their soil since 1865.)

Now we have essentially lost the benefit of our geography. Because our nation has been so overwhelmingly a creature of geography, in the twenty-first century the loss of distance will unravel us more than it will our competitors, who never required splendid continental isolation for their social and national development. Still, within the continent, at least, the sense of great space remains. As the world creeps nearer and economic borders further crumble, such space might come to mean the opposite of what it used to.

The region near Fort Leavenworth is a case in point. The town of Leavenworth—the oldest in Kansas—is, like the fort, a museum piece. Because of the influence of the elite military institution, the town, with a population of 36,000, is harmoniously multiracial to a degree that few other places in the country are. A town-council member I met told me happily that Leavenworth is “twenty years behind the curve in social change.” Here is an older America of low brick buildings and sidewalks, and a succession of streets named for Native American tribes with whom the Army negotiated treaties:

Cheyenne, Pawnee, Seneca. Whereas Leavenworth boasted a hundred mom-and-pop stores thirty years ago, though, the downtown is now failing—a victim of big chain stores and the regional shopping mall. Crime, too, has appeared, and in the early 1990s the town saw a spate of murders.

Travel a few miles in any direction and the deeper story emerges. Kansas City, Missouri, like other American metropolises, is slowly dying—slowly separating out into economic and racial enclaves that have little in common with one another even as some of them have increasingly much in common with Asia and Europe. The “new” Kansas City is growing up around Overland Park and nearby cities in Johnson County, Kansas, a booming, predominantly white, high-income and high-technology area. Johnson County is forming an axis of cultural commonality with up-and-coming Lawrence, forty minutes away to the west, the site of the University of Kansas. In Lawrence the main street is a succession of fashionable clothing stores. This new “Kansas City area” is just another place. As economic and geographic space widens between rich and poor, in Johnson County and Lawrence other distinctions blur, and what remains is cappuccino, French pastries, and designer seafood in the midst of the prairie, and European-style clothes produced in Asia. True, the worldliness is at the same time distinctively midwestern. Big smiles, free drinks while you wait for a table, huge food portions, a lack of subtlety in new building interiors and clothing combinations—all evince a dynamic, striving element that midwestern cities have always had. But such localisms are increasingly elusive. What is perhaps easier to notice is the growing similarity between the new Kansas City and upstart Asian cities that have unapologetically embraced global materialism. If the comparison seems a bit forced, it will seem less so as the years roll on.

Johnson County is transnational, whereas the poorer parts of Kansas City are stuck in the world of the nation-state—at least to the extent that the nation-state, to use the business guru Kenichi Ohmae's definition, is increasingly a device for the subsidy and protection of the economically weaker elements of our population, be they inner-city blacks or blue-collar whites threatened by competition from abroad. History could progress to the point where the affluent of Johnson County want as little contact with the restrictions of the nation-state as they now want with the military. For an increasing percentage of the middle and upper classes, the nation-state, with its taxes, welfare programs, and the like, is becoming an impediment in a global economy.

Because of America's very size, the affluent can simply move farther and farther away from the poor, rather than spend tax dollars on social programs that may or may not work. Our geography makes this possible. That is why the Democrats—the party of the poor, fighting this trend—constitute the real nationalists, and why the breakup of the Democratic Party, much more than that of the Republican Party, would herald the end of nation-state America, at least in its traditional form.

We are back to the individualism of Colonel Leavenworth, building his fort where he thought fit. This time individualism will not construct but deconstruct a polity: as new Visigothic settlement patterns forge aggregations of communities around the world, linked by jets and computers, traditional nation-states like ours, linked mainly by geography, will continue to weaken. Nineteenth-century “print capitalism,” with its local newspapers and manufacturing centers, originally formed the basis of our nationhood. But in a computer-driven, knowledge-based world economy, educated Americans will have more in common with (and, ultimately, more loyalty to) their highly educated friends and counterparts in Europe and Asia than they do with less educated fellow Americans who happen to share their geographic space. This medievalization of the continent can be compared to the period before the birth of the nation-state in North America, when the land was peopled by Native Americans, Spanish settlers, and isolated Pilgrim communities.

Infrastructure like airports and roads will have to be refurbished, if only to link places like Johnson County and Lawrence. But in the future that may be done by private capital, domestic and foreign—whatever “foreign” may eventually come to mean. Like “embassy,” “foreign” could someday connote a distant and romantic age, when cultures were distinct and colorful, like the countries on the map, rather than the gruel they will have become at the upper end of the world economic spectrum, and the uncompromising sludge they will have become at the bottom.

As technology and capital continue to weld together the affluent parts of the world, Johnson County will be brought closer to Singapore and Milan and pushed further away from the neighborhoods of poorer Americans who can't cope in the transnational world. As the scholar Paul A. Rahe writes in *Republics Ancient and Modern*, “For human beings interested chiefly in what Thomas Hobbes once called ‘commodious living,’ the establishment of great states on extended territories . . . [is a matter] of little concern.” Rahe's point is that as private life becomes more fulfilling and varied because of material gains and technological advances, interest in public life outside one's class and immediate community gets pushed aside. Given enough time, patriotism will wane, with Earth Day more symbolic for the wealthier half than the Fourth of July. (The Pledge of Allegiance may ultimately become a

pathology, as it already is among certain militia groups.) The culmination of Fort Leavenworth's history may arrive on the day when the officers sit around their wooden conference tables, with Nathanael Greene, Douglas MacArthur, and other warriors of old looking down from the walls, and argue about what it is—and who it is—they are supposed to defend.

Nationalism, writes Anthony D. Smith, a professor at the London School of Economics, emerged “out of the breakdown of earlier religious forms of culture.” As nationalism weakens, do religious and other forms of identity return? Jacksonian democracy, the Civil War, and the New Deal are examples of America's resurrecting itself. But as American society becomes more complex and interwoven with other societies, the odds for future reinventions of the nation-state get longer. Our reduced economic-growth rate—2.3 percent yearly since 1973, as opposed to 3.4 percent yearly from 1870 to 1973—indicates the harsh reality of a shrunken world in which the United States no longer has its large market to itself and American workers must compete with lower-paid counterparts elsewhere.

Of course, the grim picture I have drawn could be turned on its head to yield the Mitchell Cohen–Randolph Bourne vision of an America of “rooted cosmopolitans,” reinventing itself in a larger world by becoming an international nation (and the home base of a value-driven international constabulary) where the best and the brightest of all the continents come to live, if only for six or eight months a year. Edward Gibbon, the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, believed that a decentralized and pluralistic society with a highly mobile citizenry might survive forever. The reductions in military expenditures after each war are an example of how America renews itself by deliberately weakening the center in order to remain vibrant at the edges—as opposed to the Oriental and late-Roman models, which had despotism at the center and weakness at the extremities.

Matt Nowak is Fort Leavenworth's forester. “America is also soil, geology, ecosystem,” he told me. “I teach the military literally what it is supposed to defend.” He held in his hand a clump of loess—loamy soil kept in place by prairie grass since the last Ice Age. He pointed out a stand of old-growth pecan trees that have lined the Missouri River since before Lewis and Clark. The nineteenth-century New England poet William Cullen Bryant wrote that “prairie”—suggestive as it is, with that long first syllable, of an “encircling vastness”—is a quintessential American word (albeit of French origin) “for which the speech of England has no name.” More important, it is a vastness signifying union. Walking with Nowak along the great curve of the river near the fort, lined by sycamores and cottonwoods, amid fields of tall grass, ragweed, and sunflowers, I wondered what, precisely, the sound of that word will suggest to future inhabitants of the continent. ☼

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of the Fort Leavenworth Public Affairs Office with pictorial research.

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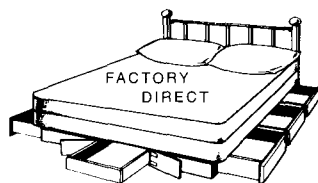
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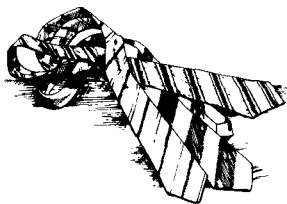
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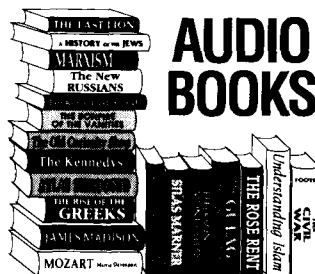
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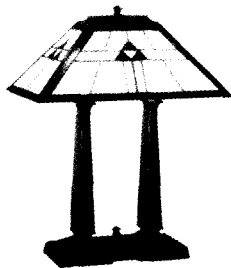


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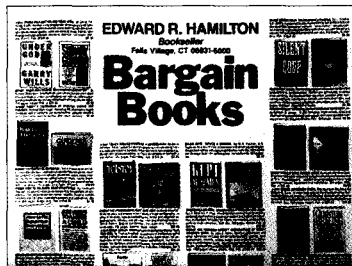
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ONE morning while staying with a friend in Sardinia, I got into the honey jar—or, more accurately, a shallow glass container with a big piece of comb suspended in clear chestnut-colored honey. It had been years since I'd gnawed at comb honey, slowly sucking out the liquid and chewing on the comb until there was just a trace of sweetness left. I was ready to try a piece of honeycomb again, but I certainly wasn't ready for the taste.

"This is the famous *miele di corbezzolo*," my host told me. I had once tried the berries of the *corbezzolo*, an evergreen

shrub that is part of the Mediterranean *macchia*, or heath. They were lightly sweet and mealy—no preparation for the shock of the honey, which made my whole mouth tingle. It was bitter, sour, sparkling, peppery, not minty but somehow mentholated, as if the harsh purity of the forest were cleansing me. Only after a study of the world's honeys did I learn that *corbezzolo* is perhaps the rarest and most sought after of all.

My Sardinian host, a psychiatrist, put me in touch with the beekeeper, who had once consulted him about a fear of bee stings after suffering several surprise at-

tacks. The beekeeper showed me some of his empty hives, which hold rectangular combs in vertical frames, as if in hanging-file cabinets. The separation between the combs is precise. Beekeeping became efficient only in 1851, with the discovery, by the Reverend L. L. Langstroth, in Pennsylvania, of "bee space"—the amount of space bees need between combs in order to work, but not so much that they will seek to anchor the combs to one another and to their home, which is usually a hollow tree trunk rather than a wooden box. (In a wonderful folk-art museum near Trento, the capital of the unjustly overlooked Trentino region of Italy, I recently saw a "scare-bear" beehive, carved from a log and painted to look like a life-sized hussar. Bears not only like eating honey; they like eating bees.) Before Langstroth's hive, with its removable combs, bees had to be driven from the hive, often forever, before honey could be harvested.

I spoke also with Mario Bianco, an impassioned beekeeper who lives in the foothills of the Alps. He told me of passing a hive one evening where bees were ripening acacia honey, the first of the season. The scent coming from the hive, as thousands of bees beat their wings to keep air circulating so that water would evaporate and the honey thicken, was nearly intoxicating, he said. "I didn't feel the fatigue of the day anymore," he told me. "It made me joyous to be an apiarist."

IHAD no idea how keepers could tell one honey from another, or could with any confidence label a honey as coming from one plant or another. Are different honeys found in different parts of the hive, or on separate parts of the comb? Do they look different enough to be told apart at a glance? The answer was simpler than anything I had thought of. Beekeepers follow the flower, moving hives to places where the tree or shrub that interests them is in the height of bloom. They harvest the honey and then move the hives to the next likely location. The Italian word for this is *transumanza*, which I first learned in reference to the seasonal migrations of sheep from mountain to meadow and back. ("Transhumance," the Eng-

by Corby Kummer

lish word, doesn't sound nearly as nice.)

The nectar of a flower bears little resemblance in taste to the fruit or herb a tree or shrub produces. Perhaps the clearest example is eucalyptus honey, whose taste doesn't recall a bit the menthol in cold remedies—the familiar scent is that of the sap, not the flower. Orange-blossom honey doesn't taste of citrus, and I usually avoid it for its overcharged sweetness. But that laden, cloying quality does remind me of passing by a citrus orchard in bloom, or a wall of honeysuckle at night.

The texture, too, varies according to the plant the honey derives from. Its ratio of fructose to glucose, the two simple and easily digested sugars that together make up more than 70 percent of honey, determines whether a honey will crystallize with time. Most do. A few honeys, like European acacia, are so high in fructose that they always remain liquid and clear. Others crystallize almost immediately. Eucalyptus, for instance, is distinctive not for its flavor but for its near-white opacity and waxy solidity. Big producers usually heat honey to high temperatures, to dissolve the crystals forever and ensure that the honey will flow out of those bear-shaped plastic bottles. They also filter out specks of pollen, the bee's source of protein and another source of nutrition, because the specks encourage the formation of crystals and cloud the honey.

Most artisan beekeepers, in contrast, would never think of heating honey to keep it liquid, because flavor-carrying components and vitamins are lost in the process. They take very seriously the curative properties of honey, which has been used since antiquity as a salve for wounds; it is also believed to be a natural antibiotic and an effective treatment for a variety of respiratory problems. They typically dissolve it in milk (the preferred Italian medium) or tea, making sure the liquid is lukewarm, not hot.

"Spun" or "creme" honeys are those whose crystals are broken into tiny bits to give a homogenous, spreadable consistency. Unlike heating and excessive filtering, the fine grinding of crystals will not in itself reduce the nutritive content, and the resulting texture is a great convenience for people who like honey instead of, or with, butter on warm English muffins and other breakfast breads. But I prefer honeys just as they are—

anywhere from perfectly limpid and flowing to opaque and grainy. Most are somewhere in between.

Honeys called "wildflower" are often light-colored, clear and liquid mongrels that taste neither flowery nor perfumed. They're bland and too sweet, as I also find clover honey, the kind most commonly made in this country. One exception is the wildflower honey from the Piedmont hills made by a company called Agrimontana, a small, quality-minded concern that also produces Italy's purest and best fruit preserves and jams. Its wildflower honey has the sudden intensity and sweet-sour aftertaste of a berry-flavored sourball. (You can order it from Dean & Deluca, at 800-221-7714; the price is \$8.50 for about a pound—a fairly typical amount for specialty honey.) Another exception is Mario Bianco's "*alta montagna*," or high-mountain, wildflower honey, which is gathered from alpine flowers at 4,000 feet above sea level. Although powerfully sweet, it is also beautifully round. (Formaggio Kitchen, an excellent cheese shop in Cambridge, Massachusetts, stocks Bianco's honeys, which are twice as expensive, and will mail them: the number is 617-354-4750.)

Many people prize the delicacy and clarity of acacia honey. I find it too delicate for any use except sweetening; it dissolves easily because it almost never crystallizes. If you'd like to try it, I'd suggest that of Rustichella, a producer in the Abruzzo region of Italy. You can order Rustichella's honeys from Zingerman's, at 313-769-1625, or from Dean & Deluca or Formaggio Kitchen.

The pale straw-yellow color of acacia suggests another generalization: the darker the honey, the stronger the flavor. And another: the later in the honey-producing season, the darker the color. Orange and citrus honeys are usually made in early spring, acacia in late spring. Wildflower and eucalyptus honeys are usually made in early to mid summer.

When the heat of summer is cooling and the bees have finished the bulk of their production, honeys start to get really interesting. Mario Bianco also keeps bees in Sicily, where in June and July he moves them to the Iblei Mountains below Mount Etna, near Syracuse, to gather thyme honey. It is magnificent: a rich golden straw color, semi-liquid and



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clear, with a flowery and not overpoweringly sweet flavor that suggests lavender rather than thyme. (Greece, too, produces superb thyme honeys.)

Another pleasing midsummer honey is wild blueberry from Blue Barrens Farm, in Maine (I found it at Dean & Deluca), which, in an exception to the rule, both smells and tastes of blueberries. K. Dun Gifford, the founder of Oldways, a group devoted to conserving traditional methods of growing and preparing food, and an ardent beekeeper in the Boston area, says that this exception applies to all honeys from berry flowers. Maine farmers have recently begun to rent great numbers of bees to pollinate blueberries. In *Following the Bloom*, a handsomely written book published in 1991, Douglas Whynott chronicles the season of several migratory beekeepers; the blueberry flats of Maine are a stop on their cross-country route.

Mid to late summer is also the time of chestnut honey, my favorite among the kinds that are relatively easy to find. Chestnut honey is clear and dark, with a smoky, slightly bitter flavor that people either love immediately or decide to avoid. It goes brilliantly with sweet Gorgonzola cheese: a perfect dessert is a soft wedge of the lightly salty, creamy veined cheese drizzled with limpid chestnut honey. (Around the Mediterranean, honey and cheese are considered a classic pairing, like Stilton and port.) I also like Rustichella's chestnut honey with the mild but tangy Vermont Sheep cheese, one of the country's best artisan cheeses (Formaggio Kitchen sells it). Honey from the manuka tree of New Zealand, too, will complement either cheese. It has a slight bitter aftertaste and the licorice-like flavor of horehound.

American buckwheat honey is as dark as molasses and has some of its hearty, malted flavor, with a hint of bitterness; it's less subtle than chestnut but worth seeking out. I've also found echoes of the husky flavor I so like in the lively creamed honey from Oregon Apiaries, which unfortunately produces mostly flavored honeys (raspberry, apricot, vanilla, and the like)—a trend to be scotched before flavored honeys acquire the popularity of flavored coffees.

Chestnut is one of the few honeys that is made better by a dry summer. Low rainfall usually means fewer flowers and

less nectar, resulting in scant production and weak-flavored honey. In the case of chestnuts, however, a lack of rain reduces competition from other flowers, and the honey gains intensity. Mario Bianco still speaks with reverence of his potent chestnut honey from the very dry summer of 1983.

THE use of honey is not restricted to sweets: witness the enormous popularity in recent years of Honeycup mustard and its many imitators. (Shockingly, the original is sweetened only with brown sugar, but some imitators do include honey.) Honey is an excellent medium for marinades, because it helps stick the flavorings to the food you mean to grill; try mixing it with white wine or lemon juice, herbs, and olive oil for meat, or with grated ginger, soy sauce, wine, and oil for fish. A glaze of honey rubbed over a chicken to be roasted will help brown and crisp it. My mother would massage the skin of a capon with a paste of honey, flour, salt, and pepper, bound with chicken fat; in *Honey*, a lovely little illustrated book, Sue Style suggests glazing a chicken with a tablespoon of honey mixed with three tablespoons of olive oil and the juice of a lemon.

Honey of course plays a fundamental role in many sweets. The chewy nougat hazelnut *torrone*, from the Piedmont, and almond *turrón*, from Spain, show how well honey goes with nuts, and Jews guarantee that the new year will be sweet by serving honey cake to friends on the first day of Rosh Hashanah. Substituting honey for sugar in cakes can be tricky, because it is both sweeter and moister, and sometimes requires the addition of baking soda. It's best to rely on a recipe that has been formulated to use honey.

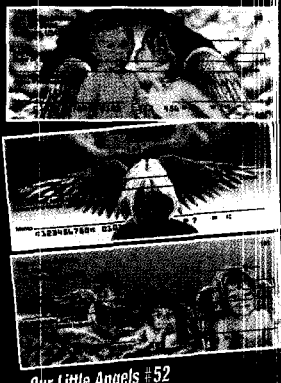
Few precautions are necessary when using honey to sweeten a pie filling, however, except that you should add two or three tablespoons of quick-cooking tapioca to absorb the liquid. (If honey has crystallized, you can liquefy it in a warm-water bath or in a microwave oven.) In the new *At Home With Patricia Wells*, the author writes of an easy apricot-honey tart: "For the past ten years, this has been, hands down, my most successful dessert."

The full flavors of a special honey come through when it remains uncooked. Sue Style's favorite honey dessert is a

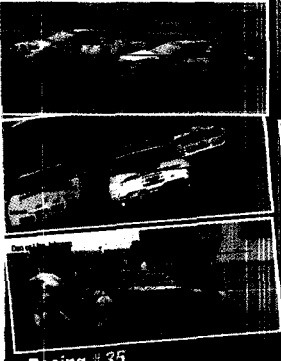
soft ice cream—what the Italians would call a semifreddo. It doesn't require an ice-cream machine. Beat three egg yolks, one whole egg, and half a cup of honey until light and airy, and separately whip one and a quarter cups of heavy cream until soft peaks form. Fold the whipped cream into the beaten-egg mixture and stir in three tablespoons of toasted and chopped hazelnuts or walnuts (you can add other flavorings, of course; pastry chefs lately seem to favor lavender with honey). Freeze the mixture in a bread pan or other tin or in custard cups lined with plastic wrap. This would be wonderful with a peach-and-blueberry cobbler or an apple-and-pear pie.

Or you can keep things to their simplest, as is always my preference, and serve whipped cream sweetened with honey on fresh or poached fruit. In his *Book of Tarts*, Maury Rubin suggests heating a mixture made up of half a cup of honey to a cup of whipping cream only until the honey melts (be sure it does not simmer or boil) and then chilling it for several hours or days before whipping, so that the cream will be infused with the flavor of the honey. The ultimate version of this would use clabbered cream from Egg Farm Dairy, in Peekskill, New York (914-734-7343), the best crème fraîche I have found in this country. Here is where a relatively delicate honey might be preferable, especially because the lighter-flavored honeys are often the most liquid.

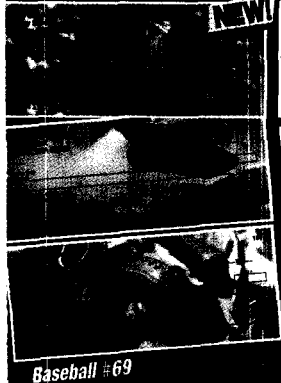
Nothing tantalizes me more, though, than that pungent, tingling *corbezzolo* honey. I accepted a big jar of it from my host's former patient without even a show of protest. And I discovered a passionate beekeeper, Maria Aresu, in Donori, a village in the verdant rolling landscape about an hour north of Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia. She led me through a tasting of half a dozen honeys, discussing the variation by season, describing the fields and hills she favored, and offering her observations of bee behavior. Much as she liked her thistle and other honeys, she placed *corbezzolo*—whose supply is least dependable—in a category of its own. Aresu beamed as she recalled how a roomful of tasters at a national honey judging had given her a spontaneous ovation when they tasted her *corbezzolo* honey. Had I been there, I would have led the applause. ☼



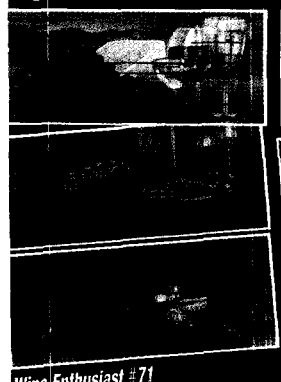
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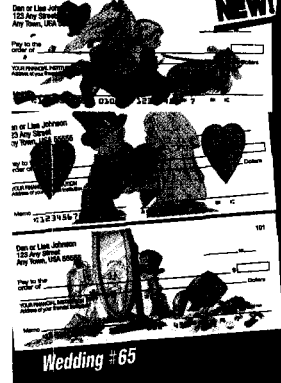
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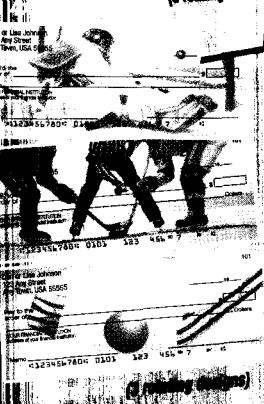
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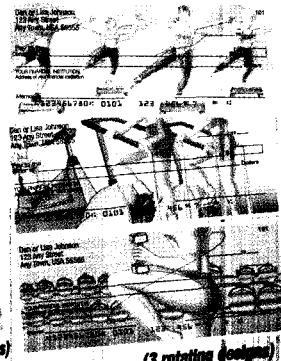
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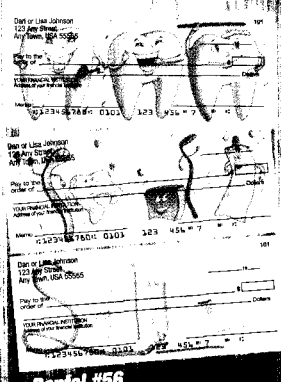
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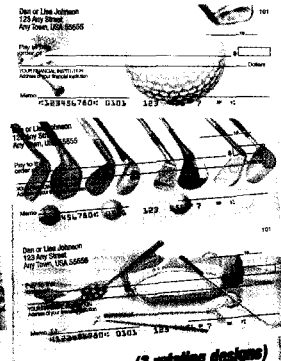
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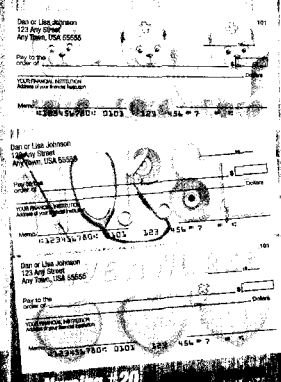
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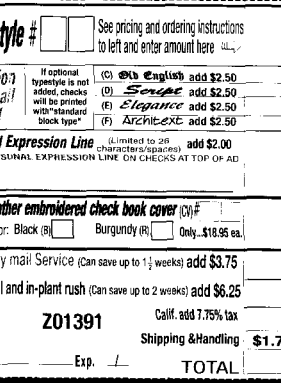
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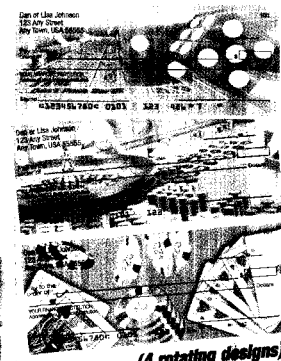
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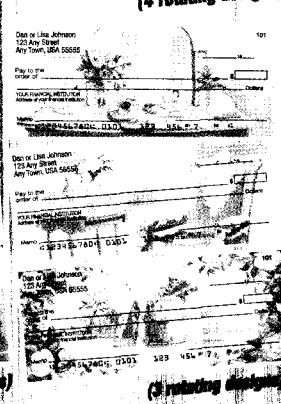
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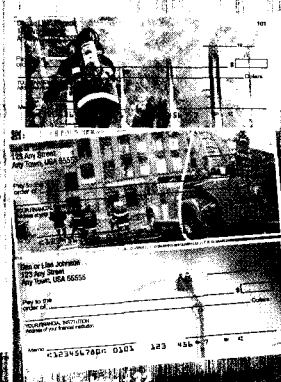
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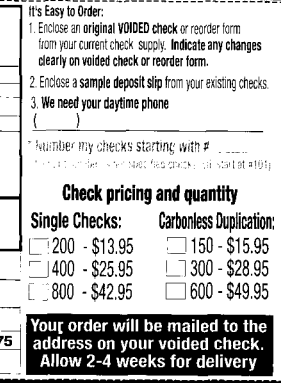
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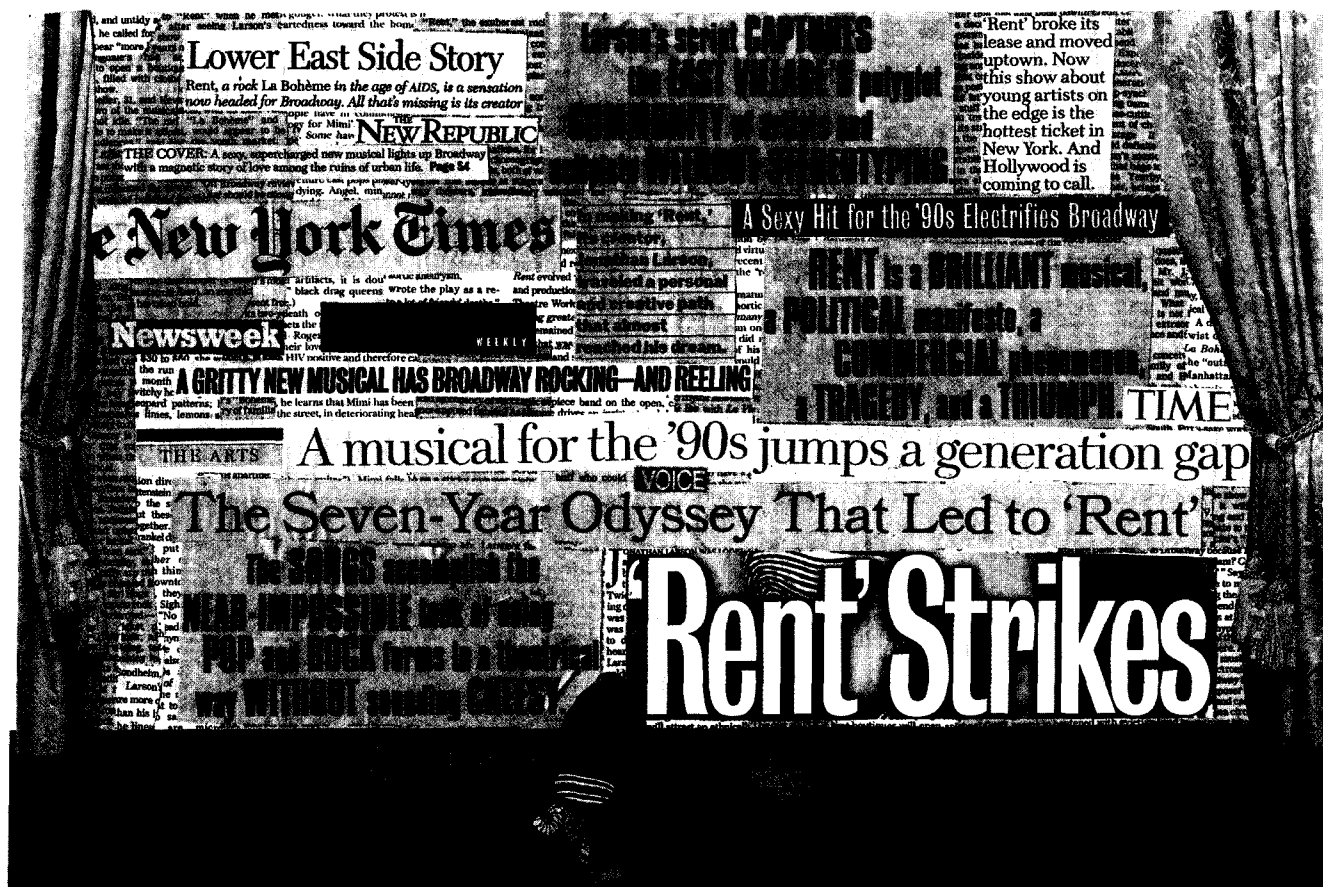
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With its pop sentimentality, Rent neutralizes avant-garde art into a form that hopeful critics take for Broadway's salvation

As everyone has surely heard by now, Jonathan Larson's *Rent*—the seventh musical ever to win a Pulitzer Prize for drama and the first to do so in advance of its premiere on Broadway—is a rock musical in the tradition of *Hair* but with even grander pretensions to opera, “sung through” by an energetic young cast that plays East Village versions of the artists and paupers in Puccini’s *La Bohème*. The painter Marcello and the poet Rodolfo have been transformed into Mark, a documentary filmmaker, and his room-

by Francis Davis

mate Roger, a rock singer and songwriter and a former junkie. Their friend Tom Collins, a computer whiz fired from MIT and now homeless, is based on Puccini’s philosopher, Colline. Musetta, Marcello’s former lover, is Maureen, a performance artist who has decided she’s a lesbian. The seamstress Mimi, Rodolfo’s tubercular innamorata, is still Mimi, but now she’s an exotic dancer trying her best to stay off the needle. She’s also HIV-positive, as are Collins, Roger, and a Latino street drummer and drag queen named Angel,

who corresponds to Puccini’s Schaunard.

This Mimi doesn’t die—or not exactly. She’s brought back from a near-death experience by her self-absorbed Roger, who tells her, “Hey, babe, don’t die—you ain’t heard my song yet.” The one who does die is the drag queen, who, like so many fatally ill people on stage and screen nowadays, is a life force whose role in the grand scheme of things is to instill in others the courage to live.

A rock opera isn’t exactly a new idea. Whether we’re talking concept albums or actual Broadway productions (*Tommy*, you’ll recall, was both), there have been too many of them to count, none of them very good. Andrew Lloyd Webber’s scores borrow the volume and aerobicized pulse of disco, and twenty-six years ago Stephen Sondheim built his score for *Company* around brass figures and bass lines that would not have sounded out of place on a Dionne Warwick record (almost nobody noticed, because he did it without saying so in *Playbill*). Staging *La Bohème* in modern dress isn’t exactly unprece-

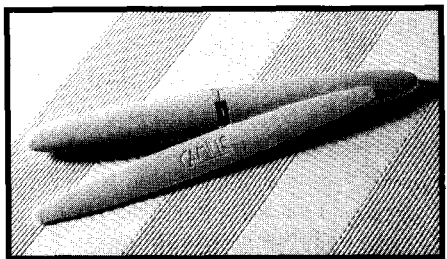
dented either, though one has to wonder if those who have tried it realize that Puccini's opera was a period piece to begin with (first presented in 1896, it was set sixty years earlier, in keeping with the Henri Murger serial novel on which it was based). Legend has it that operagoers were initially scandalized by Puccini's glorification of people they regarded as lowlifes. The truth seems to be that *La Bohème* had a lukewarm reception because its Turin premiere closely followed the Italian premiere of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*; despite Puccini's artful synthesis of traditional Italian and modern French elements *La Bohème* must have sounded positively quaint by comparison. So might *Rent* to anyone passingly familiar with current trends in performance art or rock-and-roll. Except for a few bars of "Musetta's Waltz" played twice on guitar to comic effect (if you're like me, you first heard it as "Don't You Know," a Della Reese hit in 1959), *Rent* borrows none of Puccini's music, just his characters and stray narrative details. Using the story of a great opera for a new musical might be as pointless as watching a Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movie for the plot. But this is something that could be charitably overlooked, if it were *Rent*'s only problem.

I'VE seen the show twice now, the first time last winter, at a close friend's urging, when—already a hot ticket—it was still being presented off-Broadway, at a downtown performance space blocks from Larson's grimy Alphabet City setting. There and on Broadway, where remarkably little about the show has changed, the first act ended with a bouncy song called "La Vie Bohème," Larson and the director Michael Greif's one stab at a big production number. This finds the entire fifteen-member cast at a banquet table following an offstage demonstration against a landlord (Mark and Roger's former roommate, turned yuppie) who's trying to evict them from their apartments and to remove an encampment of the homeless from the vacant lot next door. The scene corresponds to one in which Puccini's bohemians feast in a Latin Quarter café and then flee into the crowd when presented with the bill. "La Vie Bohème" is nothing if not catchy, but having it buzz

around in my head all through intermission allowed me to place exactly where I had heard that sporty, nonstop bass riff before—in "Cool Jerk," a 1966 dance hit by the Capitols, which I suspect is also where Larson first heard it. Todd Rundgren's remake from seven years later is another possibility, given that almost every number in *Rent* sounds vaguely like a tune Larson would have heard on the radio as a teenager in the 1970s. (A tail-end Baby Boomer, he died in January, just short of his thirty-sixth birthday, after attending the final dress rehearsal for his show. So much has been made of his death in conjunction with his creation of characters facing imminent death from AIDS that some people probably think he was a casualty of the disease. But the aortic aneurysm that killed Larson isn't part of his show's zeitgeist.)

A story endlessly retold in the reams of copy devoted to Larson following *Rent*'s debut has it that he broke up with a girlfriend when she doubted his ability to write an authentic gospel tune—the implication always being that "Seasons of Love," Larson's second-act opener, proves that he was right to ditch a woman of so little faith. But "Seasons of Love" is just Curtis Mayfield's "People Get Ready" stripped to the bone and reharmonized into something bland and blue-eyed enough to serve as a jingle for Hallmark or the friendly skies.

I don't think Larson was guilty of plagiarism; he was just being derivative in much the same way I was when, in my younger and more vulnerable years, I unwittingly wrote *The Great Gatsby*. Like the books we love, our favorite songs won't let go. Larson's previous shows, *Superbia*, *tick, tick . . . BOOM!* and *J. P. Morgan Saves the Nation*, opened and closed quickly, in out-of-the-way venues. I haven't heard their scores, so I don't know if *Rent* marked a departure for Larson. Given his worship of Stephen Sondheim (another recurring theme in the articles about him), my guess is that he was a songwriter working more or less within the conventions of Broadway who, having decided to write a rock musical, wound up imitating the rock songs he remembered from his adolescence, which was probably the last time he had paid much attention to rock. Because I read over and over that Larson waited tables for ten years at the Moondance Diner,



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near the foot of Sixth Avenue, while waiting for his big break, another of my hunches was that the golden oldies on the diner's jukebox permeated his consciousness. A hike to the Moondance hours before I saw *Rent* on Broadway disproved this theory, because the place doesn't have a jukebox. Even so, in the theater that night I felt as if I were listening to a seventies jukebox.

With its echoes of Meat Loaf, Bruce Springsteen, David Bowie, Billy Joel, Gamble and Huff, *Flashdance*, and *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, *Rent* is a musical in which the hits keep coming, but not ones we haven't heard before. The first time I saw *Rent*, I overheard a fellow intermission smoker exclaim to a companion, "To think that out of the death of theater, *this* can grow." It goes to show that everyone is a critic these days, though perhaps only when the licensed critics are unanimous.

ABOUT *Rent* they were almost unanimously ecstatic, paying it the ultimate compliment of pinning on it their hopes for the survival of music theater. Their logic went something like this: by virtue of being up-to-the-minute musically and in its depiction of characters for whom race, sexual orientation, and T-cell count present no barriers to friendship, *Rent* would sell tickets to young adults unlikely to pay to see Julie Andrews in *Victor/Victoria*, Carol Channing in *Hello, Dolly*, or anyone in *The King and I* (true of most young adults, I would think).

Another show making the transition from downtown to Broadway which was supposed to help get the fabulous invalid up and boogieing was *Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk*, the latest offering from George C. Wolfe, who in his capacity as producer for the Joseph Papp Public Theater/New York Shakespeare Festival is emerging as the David Merriam of identity politics. Fast on its feet if somewhat soft in the head, *Noise/Funk* is a dance musical in praise of rhythm—rhythm as a survival tactic, as a moral principle, as the secret ingredient in black life—with very few songs as such. Still running on Broadway as I write, the show was assumed by critics to be of special interest to younger black audiences for having captured not just the sound of hip-hop but a good deal of hip-

hop's combative street posture. Reviewers were enthusiastic about *Noise/Funk*, and especially about the hoofing and choreography of its star, Savion Glover, who makes palatable a series of brilliantly staged but preachy vignettes on four centuries of pain and degradation inflicted upon African-Americans, beginning with slavery.

Rent was praised to a degree that would have seemed unrealistic even for *The Threepenny Opera*. In the opinion of *Time*, *Rent* was only "the most exuberant and original American musical to come along this decade." In the eyes of *The Wall Street Journal*, it was "the best new musical since the 1950s." Michael Sommers, of the Newark *Star-Ledger*, enjoyed himself so much that he forgot to take notes, and Michael Feingold, of *The Village Voice*, was reduced to tears, presumably by Angel's death scene and its bitter reminder of Larson's own death hours away from triumph. The *Voice* was one of several papers to devote team coverage to *Rent*, with both the classical critic Leighton Kerner and the rock critic Evelyn McDonnell giving it their blessing. (McDonnell did complain that because "two of the main characters [Roger, the romantic hero, and Mark, who serves as the narrator] are straight white guys . . . for the umpteenth time, the stories of 'others' are made palatable by a dominant-voice narration." That Larson was a straight white guy himself is no excuse.)

The worth of *Rent* is one of very few issues on which the *Voice* and *The Wall Street Journal* have ever seen eye to eye. Not that the opinion of either paper counts for very much when it comes to theater. Only *The New York Times* can make or break a show, and the smitten paper of record began blowing kisses *Rent's* way even before the show's official downtown opening, on February 13. A lengthy advance feature on Larson and Ben Brantley's initial rave review were only the beginning. A Sunday Arts and Leisure section preceding the Broadway opening looked like a *Rent* supplement; in addition to yet another feature recounting the show's past from the moment of conception on, the section included head shots and thumbnail biographies of all the cast members and a large front-page color photo of them in costume, performing "La Vie Bohème." The whole thing was reminiscent of those team photos

that lesser newspapers tuck into the Sunday funnies to celebrate a victory in the World Series or the Super Bowl.

Rent emerged as a legitimate source of news when it became the prize in a bidding war between Broadway's two largest theatrical organizations, and then when it won four Tony Awards, including one as the season's best new musical and two others for Larson's book and score. (It was such a shoo-in that the producers of *Charlie Rose* and *The Late Show With David Letterman* didn't wait for the awards ceremony to book the show's principal cast members for post-Tony appearances.) But hardly a day seemed to go by early last spring without some mention of *Rent* in the *Times*, whether it was only Margo Jefferson telling us how much like genuine Lower East Siders the cast looked in their "grunge-meets-salsameets-B-Boy-meets-Riot Grrrl clothes" or Frank Rich arguing on the op-ed page that even though

some of the turn-of-the-millennium fears given powerful voice by the dispossessed bohemians of 'Rent' resemble those of what we now call Pat Buchanan voters . . . [Mr. Larson] takes the very people whom politicians now turn into scapegoats for our woes—the multicultural, the multi-sexual, the homeless, the sick—and, without sentimentalizing them or turning them into ideological symbols or victims, lets them revel in their joy, their capacity for love and, most important, their tenacity, all in a ceaseless outpouring of melody.

Rent was soon everywhere, including the cover of *Newsweek*. Just over a week after the show's April 29 Broadway premiere the cast—even at that point the most overexposed group of fictional young people since the cast of *Friends*—turned up in the *Times* once again, this time striking poses in a nearly full-page Bloomingdale's ad announcing the opening of a *Rent* boutique. It was less a case of life imitating art or of couture imitating thrift-shop dishabille than of advertising imitating editorial.

I'VE been telling friends that *Rent* is not as good as the *Times* says it is but probably not as bad as I make it sound. A number that almost everyone but me finds especially moving, "One Song Glory," has Roger, the HIV-positive

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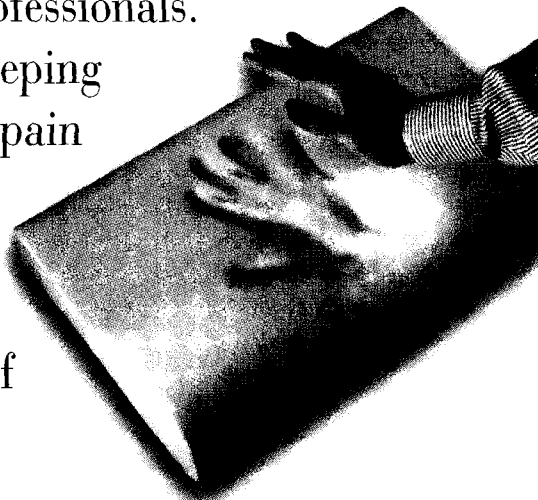


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songwriter, who we're told used to sing with a punk-rock band, expressing his desire to write one great song in the little time he may have left. "One Song Glory," like the song Roger ultimately writes, is a preening, melodramatic rock ballad of the sort that punk was supposed to stomp to smithereens. Still, this is one of those instances in which good theater doesn't necessarily require a good song. Tim Weil, the show's music director, has provided a starkly effective orchestration, with guitar reverb suggesting the steady drip of an IV. Blake Burba's lighting increases the chill by dwarfing Roger in his own shadow—the shadow of death. Frank Rich wasn't the only theatergoer to equate Roger's desire for one final blaze of glory with what might have been Larson's, had the composer known that this would be his last triumph as well as his first.

The problem is that Roger could be *Rent* the show, and his bigger-than-life shadow *Rent* the phenomenon. So much has been written about *Rent* that audiences may find themselves a little sick and tired of it on their way into the theater. The show could fall victim to the media's tendency to follow each binge with a purge. Already some of *Rent*'s most ardent early champions, including Brantley and Jefferson, have begun to question whether the show lost some of its purity or charm or social relevance in its transfer to Broadway. (The answer is no: it's a Broadway musical that happened to have its debut off-Broadway.)

I find it significant that the only *Times* writers to express strong reservations to begin with were the classical columnist Bernard Holland and the pop critic Jon Pareles. It may be that rock is impervious to emulation, something they both recognized. *Rent* may look like rock-and-roll, with its spandex- and flannel-clad cast wearing head mikes and shouting lyrics into one another's faces above a live band, but, like *Hair* almost thirty years ago, it sounds more like Broadway.

Judged as Broadway, Larson's score does not lack simple virtues. Stephen Sondheim praised his late disciple's music as "generous," a word that strikes me as particularly apt, though Sondheim probably meant something different by it than I would. Larson's melodies give themselves up very easily. Even someone who isn't especially taken with the

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songs might hum them on the way out, and this is all that many theatergoers ask of a musical. Larson's songs stick in your head, and not all of them are unwelcome there. (That they're also extremely easy to sing probably means that *Rent* will eventually be a favorite of college music and theater departments.) But this generosity is achieved at a cost. Larson's melodies are too close to the surface. Nothing harmonically complicated of the sort that goes on in Sondheim's songs goes on in Larson's. Although his lyrics are occasionally clever (when he's not making lists or settling for easy rhymes), his meanings are very close to the surface too. Unlike Sondheim's songs, Larson's are never shaded by the context in which they're sung. His lyrics are never revealed to be delusional; they mean exactly what they say. These may be faults common to all young composers, however talented, but still Larson seems not to have learned very much from his mentor. This doesn't seem to bother reviewers and audiences, who distrust what they perceive to be Sondheim's frosty intellectualism.

In *Rent*'s book Larson's generosity takes the form of bigheartedness toward his characters. Only two are beyond redemption, both of them peripheral and, in this context, stock villains: a drug dealer who tempts Mimi back onto junk and a pastor who refuses to bury Angel and condemns Collins as a "faggot." Even Benny, the nouveau-yuppie landlord, does a good deed or two by the end, and the casting complicates our reaction to him by giving the part to an extremely affable black actor named Taye Diggs. If nothing else, *Rent* is laudably unстереotypical in its characterization. Collins, the homeless MIT hacker, is black, and one of the other black characters (Joanne, the performance artist's lesbian lover) is an attorney. The show's music is another story: as soon as we hear the opening bars of "Seasons of Love," we just know that one of the black actresses is going to step forth to supply a few gratuitous melismatic flourishes. This has become such a cliché that it even turned up in the 1995 Broadway revival of *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying*, on the song "Brotherhood of Man."

Larson's bigheartedness, which I imagine was a joy to his friends, worked to

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the Arabs give up some land to get peace? Or why not just simply "peace for peace"? **"By standing firm on his campaign promises and not yielding to pressure from any source Netanyahu will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach*, to Israel and to its area of the Middle East."**

The Golan.

Before Israel wrested it from Syria, the Golan was a desolate plateau. The Israelis have created cities on the Heights, and a vibrant industry and agriculture. The Syrians, whose historical claim to the Golan is dubious, are obsessed with it and have vowed not to make peace with Israel unless it is turned back to them in its entirety. But the Golan would not be more than 1% of Syria's territory and could be of only one use to it: as a staging ground for a breakthrough attack on Israel. For Israel the Golan is an irreplaceable strategic asset. It is also the source of 30% of its fresh water. Such crucial assets should not be bartered for vague and empty promises.

A Palestinian State. Israel could not survive if Judea/Samaria (the "West Bank") were in unfriendly hands. And especially in light of the experience since the "handshake" during which time more Israelis were killed by Palestinian terrorists than in any comparable previous period, there can be little

question of the enduring hostility of the Arabs. The "West Bank" mountain ridges dominate the narrow waist of Israel, in which over 70% of the Jewish population, 80% of its industrial base, and the most important military installations are located. The Palestinians would not need an army to make life in Israel impossible. Moveable Katyusha rockets would dominate the area. And why should the Palestinians be allowed to carve a state off Israel's back? There are countless minorities all over the

world who would be deeply grateful to have even a fraction of the autonomy that Israel is already granting its Arab minority and which it is prepared to expand even further. Israel needs to keep strategic control of the "West Bank", without which it would not be defensible.

Jerusalem. Before the end of the 1967 Six-Day War, claims to Jerusalem being a Moslem holy city or the capital of any Arab country were rarely, if ever, asserted. The Moslems have designated the entire Jewish Temple Mount as their holy site. The Israeli government, in its constant spirit of accommodation to Moslem sensitivities, has largely acceded to this and has put the area under Moslem control. For over two thousand years Jews have been living in Jerusalem and they have been the majority population since the 19th century. Why should they give up their capital, their holy city as far back as memory goes—or even any part of it? The Moslems have their holy cities, Mecca and Medina, and they have 22 Arab capitals. There are important cities in the "West Bank". But Jerusalem is the eternal and indivisible capital of the Jewish State.

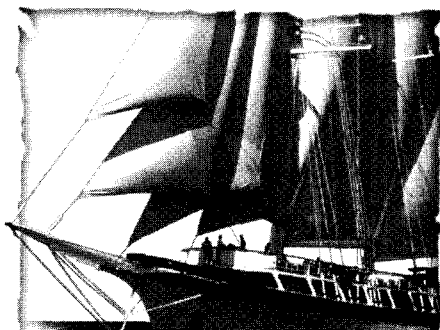
These are the most important issues that Netanyahu will address. As to Jewish "settlements" in the "West Bank" Netanyahu has made clear that Jews have the right to live in any part of the land of Israel, all of the land west of the Jordan River. And why not? How is it possible that 160,000 Jews living among 1 million Arabs in the "West Bank" should be an obstacle to peace if over 1 million Arabs live within the "green line" of Israel? They don't have to fear for their lives and nobody considers them an obstacle to peace. By standing firm on his campaign promises and not yielding to pressure from any source Netanyahu will bring peace with security, *shalom batuach*, to Israel and to its area of the Middle East.

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his disadvantage as a playwright. In *Rent* he indulged in a sentimentality of the sort that has always gone over big on Broadway, regardless of what social ills are being addressed (it's the same sort of sentimentality that keeps some of us from enjoying *La Bohème*). The show's title comes from an early song in which Larson's would-be artists defiantly refuse to pay their back rent. That they identify with their neighborhood's teeming homeless population is a given, yet the issue of social class is virtually ignored. Typical of *Rent*'s lack of political sophistication, Larson's bohemians—the voluntarily, and probably only temporarily, poor—oppose gentrification without realizing that aspiring artists like themselves are inevitably gentrification's advance guard.

This is a show in which the observation that "the filmmaker cannot see, the songwriter cannot hear" passes for a profound insight. It's as though Larson believed that his characters faced no problems they couldn't solve by getting in touch with their feelings. Angel, the drag queen envied by artists for being his own canvas, is a character we've met countless times, and so is Mark, the filmmaker who wishes to document life but is afraid to participate in it. Mark, the show's narrator, is a stand-in of sorts for Larson and a surrogate for the audience. He's also the one principal character who isn't gay, HIV-positive, a woman, or a member of a racial minority. It's a difficult role, in that it asks the actor to be as self-effacing as a person in such company might be, for fear of being denounced as "privileged." Anthony Rapp, an energetic blur of an actor who's the best thing about *Rent*, may have succeeded too well in conveying his character's desire for inconspicuousness. The Tony nominating board overlooked him in favor of four others in *Rent*'s ensemble who sang louder and did a showier job of emoting: Adam Pascal, as Roger; Daphne Rubin-Vega, as Mimi; Idina Menzel, as Maureen; and Wilson Jermaine Heredia, the only one of the four nominees who won (in the featured-actor category), as Angel.

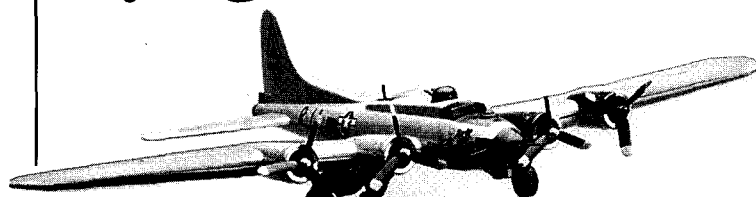
Unlike Pascal, who according to his program bio used to sing and play guitar with a rock band called Mute, and Rubin-Vega, who once reached No. 1 on *Billboard*'s dance chart, Rapp is a child

of the theater and not pop music. Yet he's the only performer in *Rent* who looks comfortable singing rock on stage—maybe because he's the only one with sufficient stage experience to realize that behaving naturally while singing material of any kind in a theatrical context requires a great deal of acting technique. He obviously glanced at rock videos; with his hunched shoulders and slightly pigeon-toed gait, he has exactly the right look. Rapp is called on to deliver Larson's attempts at recitative, and he displays a real knack for this style of singing. He makes even "La Vie Bohème" satisfying, which is no easy trick, given its endless and dated roll call of artists who were evidently favorites of Larson's but who have little resonance for today's young adults (Bertolucci? Kurosawa? Stephen Sondheim? Susan Sontag?).

Music and contemporary youth culture aren't the only areas in which *Rent* seems hopelessly out of touch. The character of Maureen, the performance artist, epitomizes everything that rings false about the show, even though it's fun watching Idina Menzel perform Maureen's act at the demonstration against Benny, the landlord. Maureen represents Larson's chance to poke fun at the excesses of performance artists like Annie Sprinkle, who puts her feet into stirrups and invites her audiences to conduct a gynecological examination, and Karen Finley, infamous for supposedly committing unnatural acts with yams. But Maureen's act is annoyingly tame: she doesn't scream obscenities, smear anything on herself, or bleed on anyone. And since performance artists are exhibitionists practically by definition, wouldn't one who has only recently come out make her lesbianism the focus of her act?

LARSON could have demonstrated with the character of Maureen how well he knew his way around the Lower East Side, but he seems to have been too genuinely nice a person to take much glee in wicked satire. Besides, it's tough to be a satirist when you're always going for the goo. In a song called "Will I" an unnamed AIDS victim who is eventually joined by the entire company wonders if he'll lose his dignity along with control of his body. The song is meant to be

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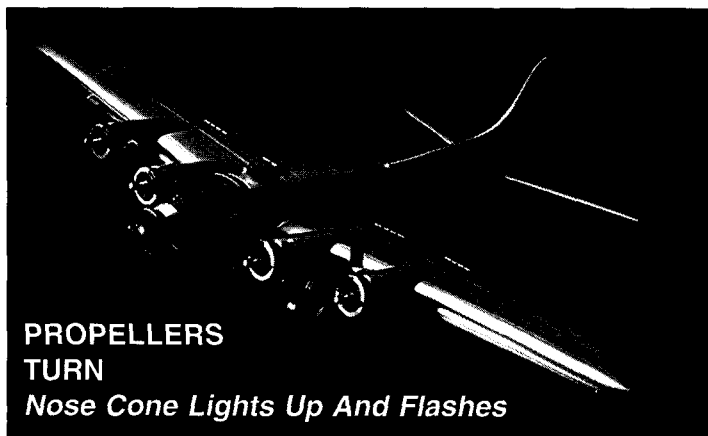


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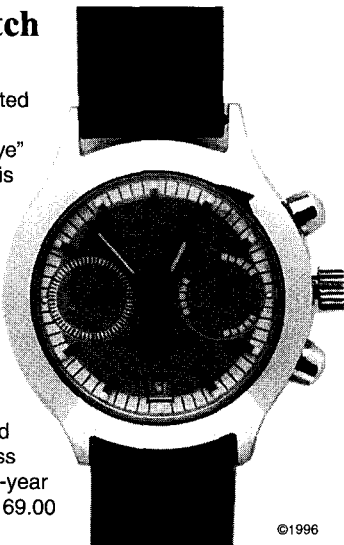


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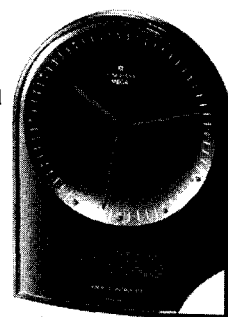
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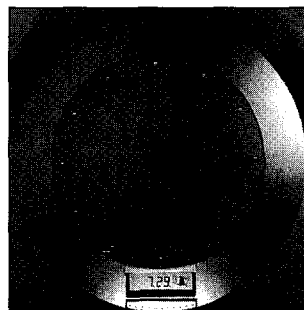
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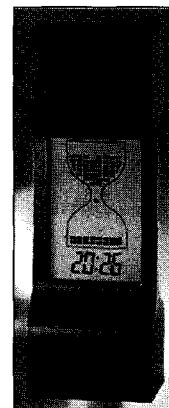


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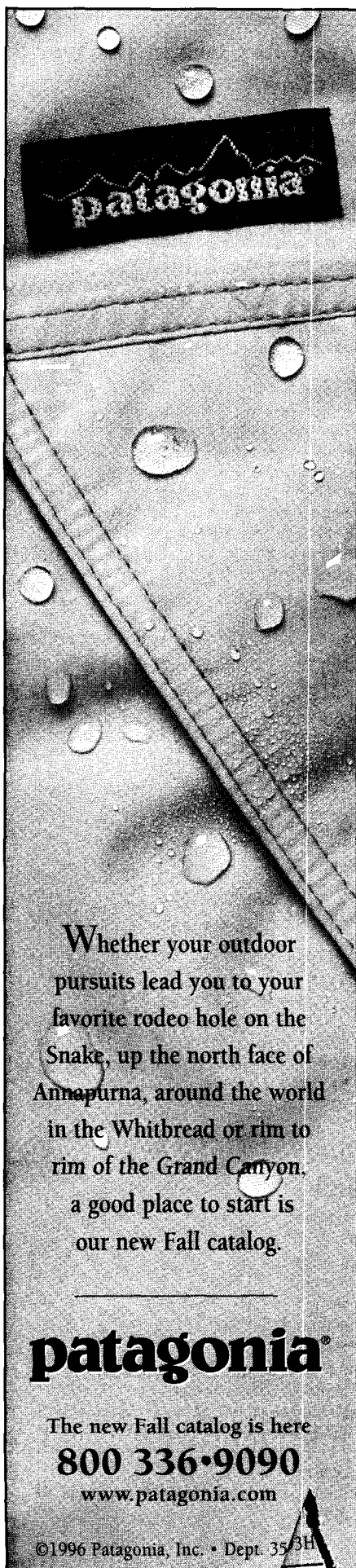
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moving, but finally it's only embarrassing. The friends I've lost to the epidemic, no matter how needy they were at the end, had too much dignity to make such a naked appeal for pity (or perhaps I just prefer to think so). Larson wanted to blast audiences out of their apathy, with the help of rock-and-roll. But his show comes dangerously close to romancing the virus—to downgrading it to one more symptom of post-adolescent disengagement. In the sixties, *Hair*, while inviting theater groups to cluck in wonder at that era's young people, with their free love, their psychedelics, and their loud music, reduced all the world's evils, including the carnage in Vietnam, to the musical question "How can people be so heartless?" *Rent*, for all that's supposed to be new about it, similarly invites theater groups to cluck in wonder at today's young people, with their bisexuality, their faulty immune systems, and their performance art.

Say what you will about *Hair* (and I'll say worse), that prototypical rock opera was transgressive in ways that *Rent* only imagines itself to be. In its own day *Hair* was as notorious for its nudity and its quasi-tribalism—elements borrowed from experimental theater, notably Julian Beck's Living Theatre—as it was for its facsimile of the big beat. In some ways *Hair* was nothing more (but also nothing less) than an amplified, optimistic, mainstream version of the Living Theatre's *Paradise Now*.

Rent serves a similar function in regard to today's experimental forms of performance art, but does so far less obviously and in a manner that promises to be far less liberating for mainstream theater. Two years ago Arlene Croce, the dance critic for *The New Yorker*, created a tempest by condemning as an example of an unfortunate trend a work by the HIV-positive dancer and choreographer Bill T. Jones that she admitted to not having seen. This was *Still/Here*, a performance in which Jones's choreography was interspersed with videotapes of people with fatal illnesses talking about their impending deaths. I think Croce misrepresented *Still/Here*, which I found to be moving largely for the videotaped interviews to which she categorically objected (the dancing itself struck me as mannered and earthbound). But I think she was right to complain of being

"forced to feel sorry for . . . performers, in short, who make out of victimhood victim art" and in defining this art as "a politicized version" of the "blackmail" practiced by even as great an artist as Charlie Chaplin when he asked audiences to share in his self-pity. Like *Noise/Funk*, with its pep talks on black pride and its calculated appeal to a peculiar sort of pleasure that disguises itself as outrage at injustice, *Rent* neutralizes and mainstreams avant-garde victim art by sentimentalizing it into what I'm tempted to call victim kitsch.

Will *Rent* revitalize Broadway by persuading young adults who have grown up with rock-and-roll that music theater has something to offer them? I doubt it, because rock is itself a form of theater for such young adults, just as the street is a form of theater for the B-Boys and gang members whose moves are emulated in *Noise/Funk*. Thirty-nine years ago did teen hoods flock to Broadway to see their likenesses sing and dance in *West Side Story*?

Shows like *Rent* and *Noise/Funk* represent Broadway's attempt to colonize off-Broadway—to reap its perceived riches. A relic of art before the age of mechanical reproduction, the theater has been dying for as long as anyone can remember, though despite Broadway's constant state of peril it contributes greatly to New York's tourism industry and the city's sense of itself as an artistic mecca. Music theater now seems in greater peril than ever, in large part because of the staggering cost of staging a new show and the consequent high cost of tickets (for \$67.50, the price of a good ticket to *Rent*, you can see ten movies or buy five CDs). Originating shows downtown and then moving the most successful of them to Broadway must appeal to producers as a sensible means of minimizing start-up costs.

But this doesn't explain why *Rent* has sparked such enthusiasm among reviewers and others with no direct stake in its box office. The only explanation I can think of is that they love music theater so much they wish it to have what Larson's Roger wishes for himself—one great song on which to go out. Either that or both they and Broadway are so out of touch that they mistake the mere hint of social relevance for genius, and the slightest twitch for resurrection. ☞

A Magisterial History

The years of abundance and racial reconstruction were all the time making for the darkest folly

by Jack Beatty

GRAND EXPECTATIONS: The United States, 1945-1974

by James T. Patterson.
Oxford University Press,
829 pages, \$35.00.

THIS book takes its place in the most distinguished series in American historical scholarship, the Oxford History of the United States. It is the third of what will be ten titles; one of its predecessors, James McPherson's *Battle Cry of Freedom: The Civil War Era*, won a Pulitzer Prize; the other, Robert Middlekauff's *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*, won numerous prizes. In consultation with Sheldon Meyer, the dean of editors in the field of scholarly history and a senior vice-president at Oxford, C. Vann Woodward, the general editor of the series, commissions a noted scholar to read as many as is humanly possible of the secondary works published on his period—the biographies, the monographs, the special studies—and as many of the primary sources as macro-history can use, and to synthesize a generation's worth of historical inquiry and knowledge into one literally state-of-the-art book. Who touches these books touches a profession.

I will not attempt to summarize the substance of James Patterson's *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*. What could one say about these postwar years in a few hundred words beyond banal generalities? Instead I will single out just a few of the qualities that make *Grand Expectations* a major work, equal to its predecessors.

1) *Thematic simplicity*. Patterson, the Ford Foundation Professor of History at

Brown University, wisely eschews thematic novelty. Of course grand expectations dominated American life and action throughout this era. Patterson does not impose this thesis. It rises from the material uncoerced by intellectual ambition. A more commercial publisher might have asked him, What's your angle? And Patterson might have replied, The truth.

2) *Common sense*. Relieved of the burden to be brilliant, Patterson is free to be sensible. For example, discussing the transformation of blue-collar workers from Depression have-nots to postwar haves, he writes, "In this way, as in many

others, the recovery of the American economy reshaped American politics—for the most part toward the center and the right." In explaining the limited appeal of left-liberal politics in these years, that sentence obviates volumes.

3) *An eye for unbeatable contemporary quotations*.

• Of Thomas E. Dewey's vapidty in 1948 the Louisville *Courier-Journal* observed,

No presidential candidate in the future will be so inept that four of his speeches can be boiled down to four historic sentences: Agriculture is important. Our rivers are





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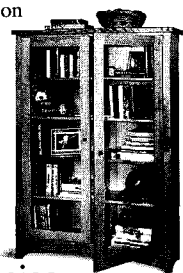
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Priceless, but vulnerable as prophecy. Tom Dewey, make room for Bob ("Like everyone else in this room, I was born") Dole.

- Of the election in that same year the humorist Fred Allen said, "Truman is the first President to lose in a Gallup and win in a walk."

- Eisenhower grumbling to himself while making "spots"—the first political ads on TV in a national campaign—in a New York studio: "To think that an old soldier should come to this."

- Eisenhower again, this time to his diary, on the subject of William Knowland, the Senate Republican leader and gruff voice of the China lobby: "In his case, there seems to be no final answer to the question, 'How stupid can you get?'"

- Ike on TV: "If a citizen has to be bored to death, it is cheaper and more comfortable to sit at home and look at television than it is to go outside and pay a dollar for a ticket."

- John F. Kennedy to Theodore Sorensen, while working on Kennedy's inaugural speech: "Let's drop the domestic stuff altogether."

- JFK to Richard Nixon: "Foreign affairs is the only important issue for a President to handle, isn't it? . . . I mean, who gives a shit if the minimum wage is \$1.15 or \$1.25, compared to something like Cuba?"

- JFK to the journalist Charles Bartlett in 1963: "We don't have a prayer of staying in Vietnam. We don't have a prayer of prevailing there. But I can't give up a piece of territory like that to the Communists and then get the people to reelect me."

- On Vietnam again, this time from the speech Kennedy did not live to deliver in Dallas: "We dare not weary of the task."

4) *A will to redeem the world by the power of the word from the monotone dream of television.*

- Thus Patterson's description of an incident that took place after McCarthyism, as Ike joked to his Cabinet, had become "McCarthywasism": "When Nixon visited Milwaukee during the 1956 campaign, McCarthy sidled up to a seat next to him. A Nixon aide asked him to leave, and he did. A reporter found him weeping."

- And on the charge of Sheriff Jim Clark's men against peaceful civil-rights marchers on the Edmund Pettis Bridge in Selma, Alabama, and the felling of John Lewis:

They tore forward in a flying wedge, swinging their clubs at people in the way. Lewis stood his ground, only to be cracked on the head. He suffered a fractured skull. With white onlookers cheering, the troopers rushed ahead, hitting the demonstrators and exploding canisters of tear gas. Five women were beaten so badly that they fell down near the bridge and lost consciousness. Sheriff Clark's horsemen then joined in the assault. Charging with rebel yells, they swung bullwhips and rubber tubing wrapped in barbed wire.

We have seen that charge many times in TV documentaries, yet Patterson makes us see it as if for the first time. Such is the power of writing.

5) *Portraits energized by brevity.*

Hoover was vain, surrounded by sycophants, obsessed with order and routine. People who met him in his later days at the F.B.I. were led through his many "trophy rooms" to his office, which glowed with a purplish insect-repelling light that Hoover, a hypochondriac, had installed to "electrocute" bad germs.

[Henry Kissinger] was a gregarious, arrogant, and extraordinarily egotistical self-promoter who carefully cultivated good relations with journalists and who was ready to work for almost anyone who would give him access to power.

Note the concession to fairness represented by "almost."

IF adopted as the standard college text on this period, *Grand Expectations* will be bound to affect the reputations of the postwar Presidents. John F. Kennedy, who in a recent poll ranked with Lincoln as the greatest figure of the last thousand years, will suffer most, as students innocent of the Kennedy charisma come of age knowing little more of him than what Patterson tells them. Patterson finds little to praise in Kennedy's domestic record—not surprising, given Kennedy's preoccupation with the Cold War. Patterson's verdict on Kennedy's foreign policy is even harsher. On the

aborted April, 1961, CIA-sponsored "invasion" of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs, Patterson notes, witheringly, "A radio station on the beach, overlooked by the CIA, reported the assault." Regarding Laos, whose "neutralization" in 1962 was once accounted a Kennedy success, Patterson is scathing about a secret counterinsurgency war that Kennedy launched using 36,000 Hmong tribesmen and thousands of Thai "volunteers"; this "continued for years until exposed in the 1970's."

On Kennedy's blink-at-the-brink confrontation with Khrushchev over the placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba: "A *mano a mano* emotionality imparted to Soviet-American relations in 1962 a volatility that did credit to neither man as a diplomatist and that provoked the most frightening military crisis in world history."

Writing in *The New Yorker* at the time, Richard Rovere said that in getting the missiles removed from Cuba without war, Kennedy had achieved "perhaps the greatest personal diplomatic victory of any President in our history." Rovere

wrote without knowledge of the thirty-three post-Bay of Pigs plans to assassinate Castro, however, or of the Kennedy brothers' covert action, in Robert's words, "to stir things up on the island with espionage, sabotage, general disorder." The Cubans, Patterson writes, "might not have looked so eagerly for Soviet military help" if that covert action, Operation Mongoose, had not given them reason to fear an open American invasion to expunge the failure of the Bay of Pigs. Indeed, Mongoose saboteurs, whom the CIA could not reach during the crisis, blew up a Cuban factory on November 8. "What would the enemy have thought if Mongoose agents had succeeded in doing so at the height of the crisis in late October?" Patterson asks. Would they have seen it as the opening shot of a U.S. invasion or air strike at the missile sites, and with what consequences? The equally reckless Khrushchev had given the Soviet commanders authority to fire the nine nuclear-tipped short-range missiles they had ready in Cuba if attacked. The stakes were indeed nuclear war.

Kennedy handled the crisis deftly and,

in rejecting his advisers' counsel to bomb the missile sites, even courageously. The credit he deserves for crisis management, however, is offset by the blame he must accept for crisis production.

FINALLY, Vietnam. Throughout, Patterson emphasizes the "optional" or "inner-directed" nature of U.S. foreign policy in the years of the Cold War, meaning that policy "often depended less on what other nations did or did not do than on what experts thought the United States had the capacity to do"—a capacity deemed limitless in the era of grand expectations. Nothing sets that era further apart from our era of "often rancorous disillusion" than the most irresponsible statement made by any of the five Presidents whom Patterson discusses. That statement was in the Inaugural Address from which Kennedy told his speechwriter to remove the "domestic stuff": "Let every nation know . . . that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and success of liberty." Not *our* liber-

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ty—the unqualified flame itself. Grand expectations indeed.

Vietnam shadows the reputations of all the Presidents of the postwar period: Truman because he broke with the anti-colonialism of FDR by subsidizing much of the French war in Indochina and by backing the French colonial puppet Bao Dai; Eisenhower because he approved the decision of South Vietnam's President Ngo Dinh Diem, Bao Dai's successor, to cancel the 1956 all-Vietnam elections that two years earlier had been called for by the Geneva conference that ended the French phase of the war in Indochina; Johnson because he escalated the war catastrophically; and Nixon because he spent the lives of 20,553 members of what he called the "Spock-marked generation" and of perhaps 700,000 Vietnamese to achieve peace terms in 1973 that were very close to what the North Vietnamese had offered, and he had found unacceptable, in 1969. But it was Kennedy's Inaugural that lent the Vietnam War its inspiring vision.

If we will "pay any price, bear any burden," then calculations of national interest are beside the point. Prudent realism is a counsel of cowardice. Because, of course, the end of the burden-bearing and price-paying was not the preservation of liberty in South Vietnam; it had no liberty to preserve. Diem was a dictator whose repression had led to the rebellion the United States was trying to quell. The end was preserving U.S. "credibility" in the nuclear standoff with the Soviet Union. Credibility—the enemy's belief that we were just crazy enough to blow up the world—was an abstract end. Unlike self-limiting war aims such as territory occupied or the surrender of the enemy, credibility was a psychological standard proof against correction by reality. Who knew when you had enough of it to convince the enemy that you'd press the button? It was fear as strategy. If we were crazy enough to fight a war in Vietnam, we were crazy enough to do anything.

Founded in fear over maintaining credibility, in the domino theory ("I believe it," Kennedy told David Brinkley in September of 1963) of Chinese expansion to Tasmania, in messianic hubris—as a chastened posterity must rechristen the Kennedy "idealism"—and in domestic political calculation, Kennedy's Viet-

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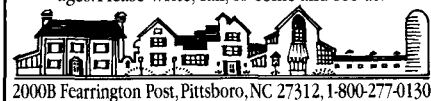
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nam policy lit the fuse that Truman and Eisenhower had left. Rejecting the 1961 recommendation of Averell Harriman and Chester Bowles to seek a negotiated settlement with the South Vietnamese Communists that would reverse Diem's fateful rejection of all-Vietnam elections, Kennedy instead breached the Geneva Agreements of 1954 by dispatching two Army helicopter companies to shore up Diem's faltering army. Ignoring the advice of the CIA and the military that it would take at least 200,000 U.S. combat soldiers to prevail in Vietnam, Kennedy supposed that the charismatic derring-do of U.S. Special Forces ("In Knute Rockne's old phrase," Walt Rostow advised Kennedy, "we are not saving them for the junior prom"), acting with the South Vietnamese, would keep Vietnam from falling and thus costing him reelection in 1964, beyond which his strategic thinking on Vietnam did not go.

"I can't do it until 1965—after I'm re-elected," he told Senate Majority Leader Mike Mansfield in the spring of 1963, the "it" being withdraw from Vietnam, which, Kennedy said, Mansfield's analysis convinced him must be done. To his credit, Kennedy had dispatched Mansfield to Vietnam for a skeptical assessment. Warning that Vietnam was fast becoming an "American war" whose further intensification "could involve an expenditure of American lives and resources on a scale which would bear little relationship to the interest of the United States," Mansfield's widely publicized report offered Kennedy yet another chance to change course. But a conservative outcry over withdrawal might cost him re-election, and that came first.

Harriman's advice in 1961 was Kennedy's first clear chance to change history; Mansfield's report in early 1963 was his second. The third and last came in the summer of 1963. As the Asia specialist George McT. Kahin argued in his definitive *Intervention: How America Became Involved in Vietnam* (1986), the Catholic-dominated Diem regime's brutal suppression of South Vietnam's Buddhists, over which monks immolated themselves in protest, offered Kennedy "a face-saving and domestically defensible way out of Vietnam." Press and television accounts crystallized "public criticism of America's Vietnamese ward . . . providing Kennedy with an avenue for disengage-

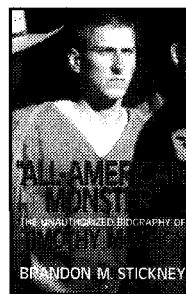
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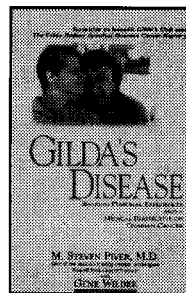
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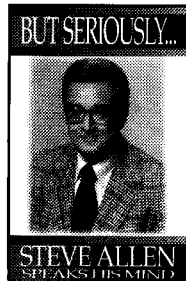
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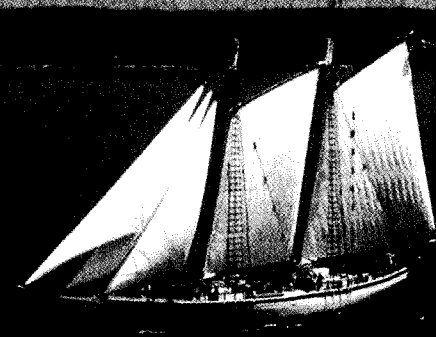
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ment that risked considerably less domestic political damage than ever before." Instead Kennedy chose to increase U.S. involvement in Vietnam beyond the point of no return by removing Diem.

By the summer of 1963 Diem was wearying of his American protectors. The huge increase in the U.S. advisory role under Kennedy was eroding his nationalist support. There were indications that he was preparing to ask the United States to leave pursuant to his acceptance of a Laos-like neutralization of Vietnam. His brother, Ngo Dinh Nhu, the most powerful figure in his government after Diem himself, was even discussing the possibility of seeking negotiations with both the South Vietnamese Communist (NLF) rebels and their suppliers in North Vietnam. In a mid-August broadcast interview with an Australian journalist, Ho Chi Minh himself said that with the withdrawal of the Americans a ceasefire could be negotiated between Diem and the NLF. None of this was hidden from Kennedy. The government we had propped up for eight

years wanted us out. It was even feared that a U.S. ultimatum to Diem to remove his irretrievably tainted brother might, as Secretary of State Rusk cabled to U.S. Ambassador Henry Cabot Lodge Jr. in Saigon, provoke Diem into asking Ho to help him throw the Americans out. Made public, this would have been unacceptably embarrassing for Kennedy and his advisers. Diem had to go.

Kennedy's "encouragement," to use no stronger word, of the military coup that broke out on November 1, 1963, and that cost Diem his life, made the United States responsible for the succession of freebooters who came after Diem. As Mike Mansfield had warned, it made Vietnam an "American war." In this context, of the two assassinations that terrible November, Diem's may have been the more consequential.

Always conscious of the looking glass of history, JFK had reason to fear the verdict of this generation of historians—whose work James Patterson's *Grand Expectations* brings to a fair, judicious, and yet decisive synthesis. ☛

BRIEF REVIEWS



Anatomy of Restlessness

by Bruce Chatwin.

Viking, 256 pages, \$23.95.

Bruce Chatwin, best known as a superb travel writer, on occasion wrote book reviews, essays, stories, and articles. Those collected here reveal a quirky wit, an inclination to beat sacred cows, and a stupefying range of information. A piece called "The Morality of Things" jumps from Jeremiah to chimpanzees and proceeds through Freud, the Grail Quest, Proust, museum collections, fetishism, Marx, animal behaviorists, and the sexing of things, although "one cannot with certainty predict the sex of, say, the sun. . . . For the Rwala Bedouin of Arabia the sun is a mean and destructive old hag, who forces

the handsome moon to sleep with her once a month, and so exhausts him that he needs another month to recover."

The Gettin Place

by Susan Straight.

Hyperion, 488 pages, \$22.95.

If they were white, instead of a mixture of Mexican and African-American, Ms. Straight's characters would be a family of industrious bourgeois trying to hold their own against urban developers and historical preservationists. This is not intended as a derogatory judgment. The underlying point of Ms. Straight's intricately plotted, exciting, infuriating novel is the degree of efficiency and energy lost to society when people like the Thompsons are mis-

trusted by the police and abused by the law. It is a painful story, violent, ultimately sinister, and most expertly written.

**The Journal of
Antonio Montoya**

by Rick Collignon.
MacMurray & Beck,
217 pages, \$17.00.

Mr. Collignon's novel interweaves intriguing ideas on the relation between art and religion and between family history and family solidarity, doing this obliquely through a story in which half the characters are charming, amiably meddlesome ghosts. This is a distinctive and appealing first novel.

**With Custer on
the Little Bighorn**

by William O. Taylor.
Viking, 208 pages, \$27.95.

William Taylor enlisted in the Army in 1872, at the age of seventeen. He wound up in the 7th Cavalry, under George A. Custer, and survived the Little Bighorn because he was among the troops commanded by Marcus Reno at that disastrous battle. He was discharged from the Army in 1877, for failing health, and during the rest of his life collected information about Custer's defeat and wrote his own account of the episode. His notes and manuscript, bounced from hand to hand, have finally surfaced for publication. Taylor was observant at the time, did sound research later, and wrote well. About the Sioux he reflected, "They seemed to us, in all their hideousness of paint and feathers, and wild fierce cries, like fiends incarnate, but were they?"—for he was well aware of the broken treaties that provoked the Indian militance. No one who values American history should overlook Taylor's contribution.

**Charles Rennie
Mackintosh**

edited by Wendy Kaplan.
Abbeville, 383 pages,
\$60.00.

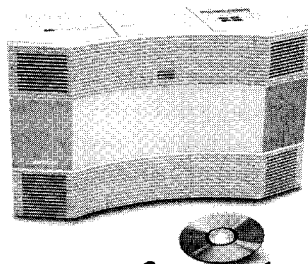
Mackintosh (1868–1928) was and remains the most notable figure of what was known at the turn of the century as the Glasgow School—architect, decorator, graphic artist, painter, and furniture designer. He created chairs with extra-

ANSWERS TO THE AUGUST PUZZLER

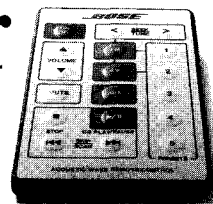
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"Rectangular"

Clues. 1. SOLITUDES (anag.) 2. T(WENT + YE)IGHT 3. HITCH (double def.) 4. ESTER (hidden) 5. RELIEF + PITCHER 6. SIGHTS (homophone) 7. RUN + TIER 8. DESIRED (pun) 9. TREA(SURE + CHE'S)T 10. HUT + CH 11. NORTH(A + MP)TON (Thornton anag.) 12. SO + NATAS (Satan rev.) 13. REGISTRAR (anag.) 14. TAN + GENT (pun) 15. TIT + F(ORT)AT 16. T + RAN + SPA + RENT 17. SPAR(k)S 18. AN + I(M) + A 19. TO(P)IARIST (a riot it's anag.) 20. RANG + E(FI)NDER 21. GE + STATING 22. T(RICK)EST 23. S + TONERS (tenors anag.) 24. PARTNERSHIP (anag.) 25. (S)HOP + SCOTCH 26. COP + ACETIC 27. DA(UNTE)D (tune anag.) 28. DE(FIN)ED 29. DR + E + AD + ED 30. SEER(SUCKER)'S 31. S + E(A)SCAPES 32. SU(NDA)E'S (and anag.) 33. S(I)ENNAS 34. MESMERISM (anag.)



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gantly high backs that were useless for fending off drafts, and these elegantly inconsistent objects can be seen as a summary of his style—a combination of the attenuated and the opulent, the grimly austere and the lushly romantic. The various essays in this splendidly illustrated study of his work cover its relation to the character of Glasgow, its somewhat tenuous connections to other aesthetic developments of the period, and the contributions of Mackintosh's wife and associates to the energetic artistic activity of their city. Mackintosh was remarkable for more than original vision: The Hill House, with a façade as grim as a brooch and an interior full of fairy-castle glitter, came in under budget.

Kandinsky and The Blue Rider

by Annette and Luc Vezin.

Terrail, distributed by Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 224 pages, \$24.95.

The authors begin the history of *The Blue Rider* in 1911, when Wassily Kandinsky and Franz Marc resigned from the New Association of Munich Artists, an organization of innovative artists founded only two years earlier under Kandinsky's leadership. The dissidents' next project was the publication of *The Blue Rider*, designed to be a journal on the arts "with contributions written exclusively by artists" and inspired by "a shared faith in a spiritual renewal of our civilisation." The editorial staff consisted of Kandinsky and Marc. The contributors ranged from the distinguished to the obscure. The illustrations juxtaposed advanced contemporary work and antique folk art. The financing was annoying—at least to the editors—and the politicking over contributors was intricate. The eventual publication was a striking success and appeared to justify Kandinsky's idealistic anticipation of an art that would override nationality and frontiers and reach "simply humanity." Then came the First World War, and the first *Blue Rider* remained the last. The authors have done admirably in describing the associates of Kandinsky and Marc, the large number of people involved in the enterprise, and the alliances and hostilities that agitated the contentious art world of the time. The book ably re-creates a herd of highly interesting mavericks. It also has excellent illustrations.

Not Much Fun: The Lost Poems of Dorothy Parker

edited by Stuart Y. Silverstein.
Scribner, 256 pages, \$21.50.

Mr. Silverstein's introduction provides as much as one needs to know about Parker, and does it briskly and capably. (The inevitable Parker anecdotes and quotations are wisely confined to footnotes, where they do not create direct competition.) As to the "lost" poems, they are those, mostly early, that Parker did not see fit to include in any collection—probably because they frequently foreshadow more-polished later versions of the same tartly irreverent notions. Parker herself once described her verse (she rejected the status of poet) as "horribly dated—as anything once fashionable is dreadful now." These poems (oops—verses) are very far from dreadful. If many arouse a sense of déjà vu, some retain their original snap.

Already he is hailed as great
By cultural minorities,
For all his works have been, to date,
Suppressed by the authorities.

Our *literati* have confessed
Nothing succeeds like the suppressed.

—Phoebe-Lou Adams

Recent books by *Atlantic* authors:

Sahara Unveiled: A Journey Across the Desert, by William Langewiesche. *Pantheon*, 352 pages, \$24.00. Langewiesche is an *Atlantic* contributing editor. This book grew out of his November, 1991, cover story, "The World in Its Extreme."

The Price of a Dream: The Story of the Grameen Bank and the Idea That Is Helping the Poor to Change Their Lives, by David Bornstein. *Simon & Schuster*, 370 pages, \$25.00. David Bornstein's article "The Barefoot Bank With Cheek," about the Grameen Bank, was published in the December, 1995, *Atlantic*.

Mona in the Promised Land, by Gish Jen. *Knopf*, 304 pages, \$24.00. A portion of this novel first appeared as the short story "What Means Switch" in the May, 1990, *Atlantic*.

The Bride Wore Red, by Robbie Clipper Sethi. *Bridge Works*, 216 pages, \$19.95. "Grace," a story in this collection, first appeared in the August, 1991, *Atlantic*.



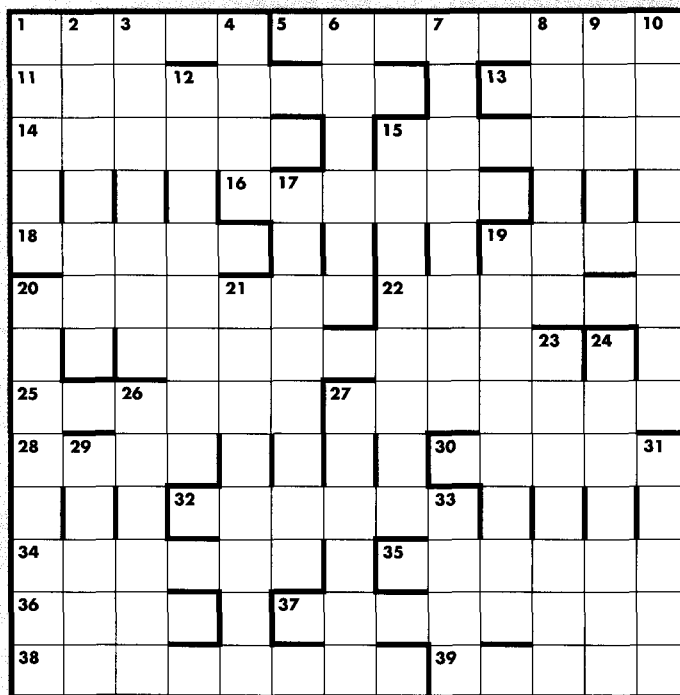
THE PUZZLER

by Emily Cox and Henry Rathvon

Puzzle Warranty

We hereby certify that our crossword puzzles for *The Atlantic Monthly* are cryptic. That is to say, each one of them involves anagrams, charades, homophones, and other forms of wordplay warranted to be enigmatic. In addition, as new solvers may be assured, our puzzles often involve a theme or gimmick in which clue answers—or some of them—will not fit into the diagram until a particular mystery has been unraveled. You have our word on this, and the unclued central entry in this month's puzzle specifies the kind of guarantee we are willing to extend. Answers include seven proper nouns and an alternate spelling at 35 Across; 15 Down and 19 Down are uncommon forms of common words.

The solution to last month's Puzzler appears on page 113.



Across

1. In reality, turned down drinks (5)
5. In island hills, first of pigs in corrals (8)
11. Lift empty container, in part, to the left (8)
13. Bars in an ornamental pattern become worn away (4)
14. Cut around exterior of Oklahoma tree (3, 3)
15. Part of a pie chart including UHF's first channel (6)
16. Piece in a store for both sexes? (6)
18. Learning Clinton's middle name (5)
19. One Mexican maintaining large part of your support system (4)
20. Without ceremony, writer with a baby seals conclusions (4-3)
22. Fifty-one of the Romans almost arranged in a row (6)
25. Run inside concert halls before end of sensational trial (6)
27. Vehicle carrying back sick English cows (7)
28. Rogue's unfinished swindle (4)
30. Highland sweetheart—no jinx (5)

32. You might say fairy-tale hero makes an impression (6)
34. Tablet with a newspaper's final column (6)
35. Blackfoot digs beverage and veggie on the tongue (6)
36. One said you work with needles (4)
37. Common note's beginning in surgery journal? (8)
38. Secretion from alien predator (8)
39. Southern constellation guys almost made out (5)

Down

1. *Pioneer's* pilot penetrates closer part of the cosmos? (5)
2. Like an egg appropriate to put in orange punch (7)
3. Study object aimed at a part of Europe (7)
4. Swedish wheels make an unhappy sound audibly (4)
6. Prophet fences small plants (6)
7. Early American: Iowa clan's second member (8)

8. Producer of a song or one cheer (6)
9. Some kind of a nut from California put in jail (5)
10. Flight attendants worry while holding doctor up (8)
12. Oddly move Pole with words of passion (4, 4)
15. Bush's quiet massage permitted (8)
17. Risk involving a royal (8)
19. Dad's brother almost comes with roaster, whole (8)
20. To wise up, Rocky falls off a surfboard (5, 3)
21. Bold United Nations air force attack (8)
23. Bigwig in shocking pink (7)
24. Germs covering a building's first floors (7)
26. Unevenly, Dean held diva's bloomer (6)
27. Kind, round movie star. . . (6)
29. . . .one appearing in film! (5)
31. Response to a joke about hankering animal (5)
39. Some stitches appear in the ear (4)

Note: The instructions above are for this month's puzzle only. It is assumed that you know how to decipher addressed, stamped long envelope to The Atlantic Puzzler, 77 North Washington Street, Boston, Mass. 021

14. . . . nplete introduction to clue-solving, send an

WORD COURT

by Barbara Wallraff

After friends ridiculed me for sounding the *t* in *valet* (as in valet parkers) instead of saying “*vaLAY*,” I consulted four dictionaries. All say that the first pronunciation is “*VALit*,” the second is “*VALay*,” and “*vaLAY*” is a poor third. Shall I continue according to the dictionary and be laughed at—or what?

Carol Valentine
Santa Barbara, Calif.

You raise a difficult issue. I don’t believe that I have ever heard any American pronounce the *t* in *valet*—although many people from the land of Jeeves and *The Remains of the Day* do. Nonetheless, that *t* appears in the first pronunciations in five of six American dictionaries and one Australian one that I consulted for you. (The exception is the *Random House Unabridged* of 1993.)

No matter how one pronounces words with conspicuously foreign origins, some people will make fun. A person is more likely to be ridiculed, though, for doing the opposite of what you did: for, say, gargling and snorting in an attempt to articulate “au gratin.” In a case like that I would gently explain to the speaker that many English words are borrowed from other tongues, and that most of them quickly become Americanized—as evidenced by the all-American first pronunciations given in our dictionaries.

What dictionaries declare nearly unanimously is nearly ipso facto correct. And so you may hold your head high as you say “*VALit*”—and keep it high throughout the exchange that will inevitably follow, and while you perhaps also pull a couple of dictionaries out of your bag and show them around to prove your point. You might prefer, though, to consign “*VAL*” to the same category as “*It is I*” as an answer to “*Who’s there?*” We all k



that’s correct, but we may still choose to be wrong, out of a wish not to seem to be flaunting our superior knowledge.

I keep bumping into constructions like “*He treats not the sick but the well*” in which the writers have inserted commas before the *not* or before the *but*, or both. My intuition tells me that they are attempting to make a parenthetical remark out of a construction that will not accept it. But aren’t they really just separating the grammatical object from the verb?

G. M. Foglesong
Livermore, Calif.

Yes, indeed. A pair of commas around a phrase often amounts to a detour sign, indicating that the main line of the sentence will resume on the other side of the phrase. But if one sets off “*not the sick*” with commas, then the main line of the sentence reads “*He treats but the well*”—a bit of a garble. Worse still is the lone comma either before or after a *not* phrase. This causes not just an ill-conceived detour but a derailment, for the reader is pushed off the track and never shown where to pick it up again.

Please note that *not* and *but* sometimes turn up together in constructions different from the one in your example, and then a comma may be wanted. For example, “*His bedside manner was not all it could have been, but at least he rarely lost his patients.*”

When I served as secretary of the organization in question, I had occasion to write the sentence “*The Friends of the USS Massachusetts (BB-2) is proud to . . .*” I thought that as perfectly correct, as I was speak-

ing for the organization as a whole and not for individual members. However, others saw it differently and said that are should have been used instead of is. Which is the correct usage? The old battleship is peaceful and harmless, but sometimes I didn’t think our members were. Help!

James C. Coleman
Pensacola, Fla.

Two issues are involved in a question like this. First, is the sense of the noun staunchly plural, staunchly singular, or open to either interpretation? Of course one wouldn’t say “*Friends are* my favorite TV show”—here the word is the name of the show much more than it is a reference to plural persons. But you were a Friend of the USS Massachusetts, weren’t you? And weren’t at least some of the Friends friends of yours? So your Friends at least sometimes acted plural.

Second, which construction sounds more natural?

This criterion is why the Rolling Stones and Hootie & the Blowfish tend to be referred

to in the plural, whereas Abba, Pearl Jam, and the Boston Symphony Orchestra tend to be singular.

Having made a general decision about how to treat a given name—and in the case of your Friends, I would vote for using the plural—one may yet admit exceptions. The only thing that is definitely not allowed is for a given instance of “*Friends*” to be singular and plural at the same time: “*I would think the Friends was a friendly organization even if they weren’t in agreement with me.*”

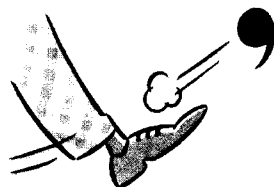
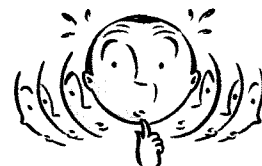




Fig. 1

Technical drawing of a crosshair or X shape, likely representing a design element.



Fig. 2

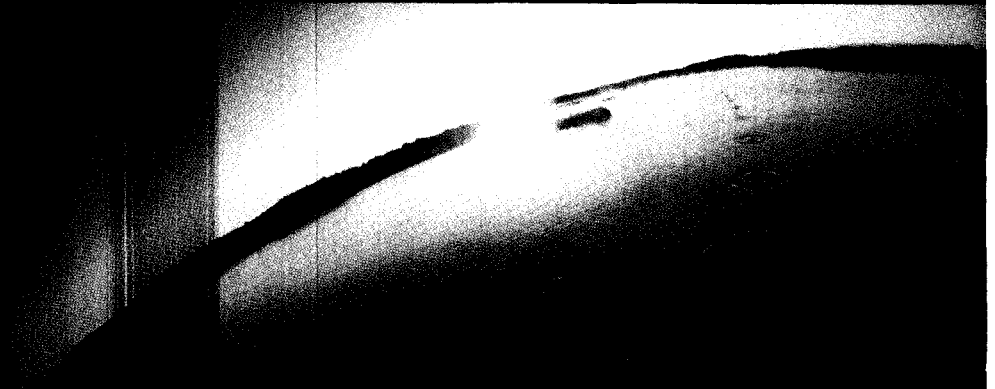
Technical drawing of a circular shape with internal lines, likely representing a design element.



Fig. 3

Technical drawing of a rectangular shape with internal lines, likely representing a design element.

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